LIBRARY
Pacific Theological Seminary

No. 374

Presented by Rev. E. S. Lacy.

# NATURAL GOODNESS:

OR,

# HONOUR TO WHOM HONOUR IS DUE.

SUGGESTIONS TOWARD AN

APPRECIATIVE VIEW OF MORAL MEN, THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF MORALITY, AND THE RELATION OF NATURAL VIRTUE TO RELIGION.

BY REV. T. F. RANDOLPH MERCEIN, M. A.

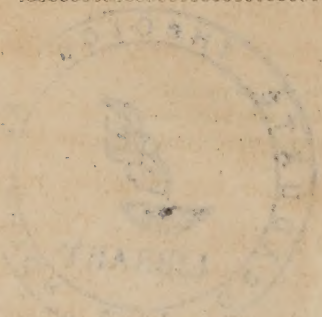
"His life was gentle, and the elements
So mix'd in him, that nature might stand up
And say to all the world—Behold a man!"

New-York:
PUBLISHED BY ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH,
683 BROADWAY.
1855.

BJ
47
M5
1855

QH4
M534

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1854,
BY CARLTON & PHILLIPS,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the Southern District of New-York.



# Preface.

A BOOK, like an implement, must be judged by its adaptation to its special design, however unfit for any other end. This volume is designed to meet the peculiar difficulties of one class of thinkers, in regard to one aspect of religious truth. Its unfitness to meet other wants of other classes, is admitted in advance.

It may be a vain hope that the circle of moral men who attend our churches regularly, who are penetrated with a Christian sentiment, and who without a scholastic training are disciplined and practical thinkers, may find in these pages a view of their posi-

tion and relation to religious experience more satisfactory than is given by the ordinary sermon, or the discussions of Systematic Theology.

Different classes of men have different methods of thinking, as well as different points of view from which they see things. Standing upon separate *terraces* of the ascending slope of talent and culture, each class looks out and sees Truth encircled by a new combination of difficulties. A teacher, then, must take *their* position, and from thence relieve their perplexities. And so each class has its own peculiar method of associating thoughts and framing arguments —has its own peculiar *idiom* of thinking— and in order to be easily and fully convinced, must be addressed in its own *dialect* of thought.

None will expect, then, an exhaustive discussion of our topics, but only a considera-

tion of such prominent points and occasional aspects as are of interest to the men for whom we write. Much may be said or left unsaid which, in view of any other class, would be of different propriety.

Yet, although these essays are distinct, there is a logical connexion between them, and they suggest a general theory. So far as it varies from the common methods of explaining the natural virtues, the author can only ask that he may not be judged harshly, as he has only suggested, and with diffidence. Certainly no other view has yet *satisfied* the Church. Every sincere, although unsuccessful, attempt to open the lock of Truth is a benefit to mankind. As each new key of theory is found to fit one ward, and yet another, we gain a clearer idea of the key which will pass them all, and spring the bolt.

The technical phrases employed to denote

certain experiences or doctrines have their value: they have for the Church a definite meaning, and are essential to accurate and brief expression: but to one without, even if they do not seem like *cant*, they are apt to convey a false meaning, or no meaning at all. A similar remark may be made in regard to the usual routine of argumentation. Therefore we feel free to employ new terms and new forms of argument, not because they are better in themselves, but because they come free from the old prejudices.

That there is increasing need of such books is certain: and if no more is accomplished, this volume may incite abler pens to write a better.

# Themes.


I. INJUSTICE DONE TO MORAL MEN.

II. THE GENERAL UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF DEEP GUILT.

III. THE TEMPORAL REWARDS OF MORALITY.

IV. THE COMPARATIVE RECTITUDE OF HUMAN CONDUCT.

V. THE NATURAL VIRTUES.

VI. THE RELATION OF MORALITY TO RELIGION.

VII. THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT IN HUMAN NATURE.

VIII. RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE—CONVICTION.

IX. RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE—REPENTANCE.

X. RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE—FAITH.

XI. LOVE TO GOD, THE CRITERION OF VIRTUE.

XII. INJURY DONE TO RELIGION BY MORAL MEN.

# Contents.


## I.

INJUSTICE DONE TO MORAL MEN.

Apparent contradiction between the life and feelings of moral men and the denunciations of Scripture—The effect of the discrepancy upon the Church and the world—Chalmers's views—Protest of moral men in our congregations—Theology built upon the doctrine of depravity of human nature—Summary of presumptions against the doctrine, afforded by common observation—Faith even in revealed truth made difficult by the spirit of philosophical investigation—The fewer the unsolved problems the better—Natural resentment against wanton imputations of moral debasement—Progress of theories in regard to natural virtue—Candour and manly consideration due from the moral man to one who submits a respectful discussion of the facts..... Page 13

## II.

THAT THE GENERAL UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF DEEP GUILT AFFORDS NO PRESUMPTION AGAINST THE DOCTRINE OF UTTER DEPRAVITY.

Severe language of Scripture is not attested by the common conscience—Sin brings insensibility to itself—Analogy of moral sensibility to intellectual *taste*—Progress of crime and moral sensibility—Reverse experience of a heart renewed and growing purer. So, according to present constitution, depravity is as consistent with unconsciousness of sin as innocence itself—Reason for this suspension of the connexion of remorse with sin—Full remorse would unfit the soul for a probation—Fallacy of heresies in regard to eternal punishment—Fatal effect of full anticipation of due punishment—The gradual revelation of guilt in successive dispensations—Faith the only knowledge..... 31

## III.

PRESUMPTION AGAINST IDEA OF DEEP GUILT AFFORDED BY GOD'S TEMPORAL BLESSINGS UPON NATURAL VIRTUE.

Intuitive expectation of the connexion of virtue with happiness, and sin with misery—Personal feelings of the sovereign Disposer of events evidenced by distribution of his favours—National dispensations—Scripture promises—Different moralities, each independent of the others, and not implied by them—Their rewards equally separate and not implied by each other—A new morality and its reward would follow same law—Spiritual and eternal morality not implied by temporal moralities, nor its reward by theirs—Temporal blessings evince no estimate of our *motives*, yet they serve other essential ends—They show the moral character of God's government, and the principles of his *final* award—Afford a guide to an awakening conscience—They are further essential in carrying out the plan of redemption..... Page 55

## IV.

PRESUMPTION AGAINST IDEA OF DEEP GUILT AFFORDED BY THE COMPARATIVE RECTITUDE OF HUMAN CONDUCT.

The point conceded that in all the relations of private and of public life, there is a preponderance of right over wrong actions—Secondary motives to morality—Prudential considerations—Pride of character—Case in point—Such considerations regulate immense proportion of cases—The fact of a conscious repugnance to gross sins considered—Association of crime with its consequences—Less familiar forms—Social instinct against destructive vices—Social instinct not a moral sensibility..... 81

## V.

THE NATURAL VIRTUES.

Spontaneous and disinterested impulses of human nature—Neither angelic nor fiendlike—Benevolent institutions—Literature—Common life—Virtues not due to culture or civilization—Chalmers's view, and its defect—The test found in the uniformity with which

a love of virtue would act—Magnetic bar—Natural virtues unsymmetrical—No pervading purity of principle—If not religious, what are they?..... Page 111

## VI.

### RELATION OF MORALITY TO RELIGION.

Principle of perfect holiness insures love to God and all right affections toward man—A wrong principle would destroy both love to God and all virtuous relative affections—Chalmers's view defective—Portraiture of a world wholly depraved—Preliminaries essential to make a probation possible—Affectional instincts—Morality the "false-work" of redemption..... 139

## VII.

### THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT IN HUMAN NATURE.

Spiritual capabilities. 1. Indestructible—Conscience as legislator and executive—Comprehension of pure sentiment and affections—Perception of *beauty* of holiness. 2. Destructible and requiring renovation—Affections—Will—Measure of freedom given to qualify for a consent to receive the whole. True position of moral men..... 165

## VIII.

### PHASES OF CONVICTION.

Consciousness of sin as varied by heathenism and by Christian privileges—As affected by familiarity—Constitutional temperament—Sympathetic emotion—Personal circumstances—Gross crimes—Connexion with fear, &c.—Knowledge of our sin and want the only prerequisite to action..... 189

## IX.

### PHASES OF REPENTANCE.

First resistance to evil—Widening circle of spiritual foes—Sense of intrinsic evil—Of utter depravity—Self-culture, its power and its inadequacy—Gradual reception of divine aid—Mental prayer—Singular cases—Absence of terror—Hatred to sin—Tropical and polar growth..... 211

## X.

### FAITH.

The penitent must take his true attitude of self-despair, and of positive reliance on God's promises—The philosophy of atonement need not be comprehended—Faith of reliance—Of apprehension—Negative power of unbelief—Effect of faith not a natural result—Aid rendered by the temporary moral system of the world to the true work of faith ..... Page 231

## XI.

### LOVE TO GOD THE TEST OF VIRTUE.

Love to God, although but one part of religion, still an essential part—Love of qualities or attributes implies love to their possessor—Tests of personal affection—Peculiar value of this criterion, arising from the presence of instinctive impulses, parallel to the relative virtues—Love to God has no substitute—Relation of the love of God to practical philanthropy..... 253

## XII.

### INJURY DONE TO RELIGION BY MORAL MEN.

Moral men directly, in virtue of their morality, do injure religion—Power of example—Confusion of morality with religion—Idea of sufficiency of morality to an inferior salvation—Responsibility for this influence—Objection anticipated—Conclusion of the work..... ..... 273

# I.

## Injustice done to Moral Men.

"Then gently scan your brother man;
Still gentler, sister woman!
Tho' they may gang a kennin wrang,
To step aside is human.
One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving, why they do it;
And just as lamely can ye mark,
How far, perhaps, they rue it."

BURNS.

"Yet Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil, . . . durst not bring against him a railing accusation."

ST. JUDE.

# NATURAL GOODNESS.

## I.

### INJUSTICE DONE TO MORAL MEN.

The memory of one of the noblest spirits that ever breathed—whose threescore years of public integrity and benevolence were sealed by the loveliness of every domestic and social virtue, although unrestrained by the force of a strictly religious experience—has bound my heart to the whole class of men of whom he was the type; men whose career of uniform and steadfast virtue shames the inconsistency of many in the Church itself, and whose life and experience seem at once to give a dignified rebuke to the charge of deep depravity, and to deny the need of regeneration, as it is commonly understood; men upon whom, as Jesus looks, he loves them. Yet the added recollection that such a one, in the full maturity of all the mental and moral

excellencies which had adorned life's meridian, was made, as its evening drew on, to feel the insufficiency of all such virtues, and sought and found pardon and renewal, as one who had utter need of both, has ever been to me the strongest confirmation of the necessity of such moral transformation for every heart, and has awakened the intensest desire that those who are honoured with his earlier experience may not die without his better hope.

There appears to be a strange contradiction between some of the sterner, exclusive, and denunciatory doctrines of Scripture, and the facts of human life and consciousness, especially in the moral history of such men; and like the difficulties presented by science in its progress, such facts may not be either ignored or denounced. The cavils, indeed, which are uttered from among the stars, or echoed from the uncovered chambers, where, like the graven tiles of Nineveh, nature has piled strata upon strata, the archives of forgotten epochs, may only reach the learned and the speculative ear; but questionings that speak out from our own consciousness and experience, seem like a protest of our very being against these repulsive dogmas, and are heard alike by all. Divines may

warn us that revelation must claim our faith, however it may perplex our natural reason. It may even be true that a heart, properly affected by the great truths of Scripture, might easily dissipate such gathering doubts by the beaming assurance that shines from its inmost soul. But the gospel is urging its claims upon those who, as yet, have not felt its "demonstration of the Spirit;" and their perplexities demand relief. The Christian may see such objections as very small obstacles between him and the spiritual intuition, which, although they remain, yet like a sun pours around and over them its radiance. But to the doubting heart, that sun, far removed and lessened to a mere star, may be obscured by a petty obstacle near the eye. If such doubts sometimes harass even a Christian's faith; if some candid minds, from a too vivid apprehension of apparent contradictions presented by experience to Bible truths, reason backward to a false interpretation of the word itself; if, above all, in thousands who hold the truth, its power is neutralized by this underthought of error, it must be an object worthy of deepest solicitude, to reconcile the apparent discrepancies, and avert the danger as we may.

"There is a way of maintaining the utter de-

pravity of our nature, and of doing it in such a style of sweeping and vehement asseveration, as to render it not merely obnoxious to the taste, but obnoxious to the understanding. On this subject there is often a roundness and a temerity of announcement which any intelligent man, looking at the phenomena of human character with his own eyes, cannot go along with. And thus it is that there are injudicious defenders of orthodoxy, who have summoned against it not merely a positive dislike, but a positive strength of observation and argument. Let the nature of man be a ruin, as it certainly is; it is obvious to the most common discernment, that it does not offer one unvaried and unalleviated mass of deformity. There are certain phases and certain exhibitions of this nature which are more lovely than others—certain traits of character not due to the operation of Christianity at all, and yet calling forth our admiration and our tenderness—certain varieties of moral complexion, far more fair and more engaging than certain other varieties; and to prove that the gospel may have had no share in the formation of them, they in fact stood out to the notice and respect of the world before the gospel was ever heard of. The classic page of antiquity

sparkles with repeated exemplifications of what is bright and beautiful in the character of man; nor do all its descriptions of external nature waken up such an enthusiasm of pleasure, as when it bears testimony to some graceful or elevated doing, out of the history of the species. And whether it be the kindliness of maternal affection, or the unweariedness of filial piety, or the constancy of tried and unalterable friendship, or the earnestness of devoted patriotism, or the rigour of unbending fidelity, or any other of the recorded virtues which shed a glory over the remembrance of Greece and of Rome,—we fully concede it to the admiring scholar, that they, one and all of them, were sometimes exemplified in those days of heathenism; and that out of the materials of a period crowded, as it was, with moral abominations, there may also be gathered things which are pure and lovely, and true and just, and honest, and of good report."*

How startling and indignant the protest which at times comes from the ranks of estimable men, who gather around, although not within the Church, against those associated dogmas of total depravity, regeneration, and, by consequence, a vicarious atonement. They are asso-

* Chalmers's Commercial Discourses, Sermon I.

ciated doctrines, and stand or fall together. The remedies employed by a skilful physician must correspond to the disease; and if the disorder be slight, or easily remedied by diet and exercise, the idea of extreme medical treatment is absurd, because it has no correspondence with the malady to be relieved. They that never have died, need no power to call them from the sepulchre. The idea of a new birth, a new creation, for a soul that needs only a slight retouching from the almighty Sculptor's hand to restore its finished beauty, is at once rejected. If human nature, therefore, be not thus deeply depraved, the remedial provision of the gospel involves no regeneration and no atonement. It is to human nature as exhibited in common life, and felt in common experience, that men turn instinctively to see if there is really a need of the remedy which is urged upon them. It is here that many a wavering mind relinquishes its faith in the doctrine of the Bible as to his utter depravity by nature. From the general unconsciousness of sin, acquitting men of such enormous guilt—from the natural virtues, as they seem, which in every age and clime have had noble illustrations—from the minute care with which Heaven seems to seal each step of moral

rectitude with its providential reward, and its inward approval—from the deep repugnance to gross forms of sin, felt amid all human imperfections—from the spontaneous admiration of the truthful and the pure—from the power of self-culture, apart from prayer and reliance upon divine aid, to strengthen and elevate these original gifts—from the frequent absence of any sudden transition, or a clear line of demarcation between the prior experience and an experience admitted by all to be truly religious—there comes a voice of questioning which will make itself heard, and which must be answered.

Nor is the spirit of such questionings altogether wrong. It is the spirit of the age, seeking to prove all things, and hold fast that which is true. The Baconian philosophy has taught us that in science a theory which fails to account for, and correspond to, a large proportion of evident facts, is thereby proven false and untenable. The days are gone by, when from a few general notions a philosophy could be woven which should bind the world's faith, in spite of clearer observation of realities around it. One of God's facts shatters all the crystalline spheres of human fancy.

In the olden time, speculation, standing upon

the shore of a broad stream of doubt, planned a bridge to cross the gulf, and insisted that each arch of reasoning *would* find a secure abutment of facts, although no facts could be seen to lend a foundation, and many were evidently waiting to lend support to some other effort of logical architecture. Modern criticism trusts no bridge of theory where it cannot see that each pier rests upon, and does not fall between, the facts. To this mode of criticism, a theory given by revelation is, of course, not liable. Human ignorance is bound to believe that its dim vision, or the mystery that gathers around those facts on which the arch of truth rests, deceives the eye as to the true place and support of each. It must trust the all-wise Architect, despite its ignorance. What it knows not now it may know hereafter. Yet certainly, the scientific scepticism thus induced, and proper, too, in investigating the merits of all other theories, renders less easy a faith in a revealed doctrine which is apparently at war with facts, even when the revelation is sufficiently attested from without. If, therefore, all mists cannot be cleared away, it is well if some may vanish: and if some things still seem unaccountable, their fewness will make it easier for a wavering faith to decide the scale against them.

There is in any argument a satisfaction in defining exactly the limits of the difficulties which we cannot remove: for an indefinite amount of objection has the force almost of an infinite difficulty. When the moralist is assured that we do really appreciate the facts and the perplexities in regard to his case, he will feel that there must indeed be some unseen force in those other arguments, which may, notwithstanding all, leave our candid judgment against him.

Above all, no man can be expected to admit imputations against his moral worth calmly, and as mere questions of curiosity, as he would receive intimations of the unsoundness of a fruit-tree. It is a law of our mental constitution that we must resent injustice and slander. There is no emotion so quickly excited; and with all the energy of self-preservation it combines a sense of noble and sacred resistance to wrong. One false charge will generally destroy the force of the evidence of many true ones. The tide of indignation against the insult, quickly felt and clearly perceived, bears away with it not only the slander, but the associated charges and their evidence. A slight consideration of this familiar principle would save the waste of many a public lecture, and many a private rebuke. And thus

it has come to pass, that the class of men, which of all for whom Christ died are most endeared to our hearts, and for whom the transition into all that constitutes religion would seem the most natural, are left half-bewildered, half-indignant, at the undiscriminating invective that is poured upon them.

Centuries ago, a theology that would not allow God's Spirit even to touch a heart that was not to be finally saved by the atonement, wrote its severe proscriptions against all worth or loveliness in morality, before conversion. It adopted the theory in reference to the many, which infidelity applied to all: that there was in them no disinterested virtue; but that a desire for self-gratification was the one element into which all impulses, how noble soever they seemed, were at last to be resolved. "Selfishness" was the comprehensive label placed on all that seemed "true and lovely, and of good report." Bishop Butler demonstrated for all time, that both good and evil impulses and affections were not mere motives of self-interest; but that there is in every heart a natural kindliness, and compassion, and gratitude, developed in different degrees, which, whatever might be their moral value before God, are as spontaneous and disinterested as an angel's

love—or as the love of God to man. In later years, the candid and generous mind of Chalmers has acknowledged and honoured the "historical virtues," as the yet unfallen columns of our shattered nature. And M'Cosh has given the same idea a yet more systematic exposition. The violent reaction from the old extreme into an avowed Pelagianism—openly denying the fall, asserting the identity of natural goodness with religion, and setting forth human nature and history in its brightest aspects—has tended to modify the sentiment even of the Church. And finally the rapid enlargement of the truly evangelical Church, spreading from the centre like a circle of light, and surrounded by a still increasing belt, like a penumbra, of hearts not of it, yet unconsciously pervaded and tinged with its spirit, is forcing these characters more and more upon our attention. The common broad and blunt denunciations fall harmlessly at their feet. They need a missile pointed more accurately, and with a more discriminating edge, to pierce the joints of their armour. Of many of them the pulpit and the Church are sorely puzzled what to think, and how to speak. Some of them, in all candour, are in doubt what to think of themselves.

It will be seen that we use the word *morality*

not in its philosophical signification, but in what is now its popular sense, to indicate those feelings and duties, which the voice, both of revelation and of nature, declares us to owe to ourselves and to others, independently of our duties to God: and at times, we shall include all sentiments and affections, all purposes or actions, possible to a soul which can be considered as yet unregenerate, in the common acceptation of that word.

Honour, then, to whom honour is due. We call upon the Church to recognise all the noble deeds and lovely traits that humanity displays. We call upon her to concede their existence, not grudgingly, and with suspicion, but cordially and thankfully, as the providence of God, and the benefit of man. We summon nature's nobleman to look upon his own virtues, and take their fullest gauge. We will exult in his princely honours. He shall feel that we at least are willing to take his virtues for what they are.

If then, with a filial reverence and sorrow, we should express to the amiable and honoured moralist, a fear in his behalf, we have a claim upon him for a manly candour and a generous forbearance, as he has a claim on us for careful consideration of his dearest honours. We shall not blame him in that he shrinks from the sense

of shame; nor will we attribute this to the depravity which we lament. Self-respect is not pride; and humility, even in its Scriptural spirituality, implies no insensibility to the degradation of moral pollution, nor a tame and apathetic submission to the charge of vileness. Humility, indeed, is willing to abide wherever the will of God may place us: but, conscious that moral depravity is not of his appointment, but a desecration of his purposes, humility can but feel the brand of guilt an insult if it be false, and a bitter humiliation if it be true. God, who made us in his image, has his own felicity in conscious holiness, and seeks a "hallowed name:" and that deep sense of the worth and glory of moral excellence, is the essential mould in which every virtue is to be cast—the base and socket, from which every column of moral beauty rears its majestic form. It is not all of pride, therefore, that a generous spirit should shrink from the consciousness of sin, or struggle against the conviction of his guilt: it is the voice of his indestructible nature, against the sin itself. And he who has no sympathy with that unwilling and astonished soul; he who can lightly avow his own depravity, or affix the stigma on a fellow-man—he has never yet been made to realize

the "shamefulness of sin," nor felt how godlike is God's image.

Yet, humiliating as is the consciousness of debased affections, there is still that which amid the wreck has somewhat of dignity, and whose loss were a deeper degradation still. Whatsoever we are, and whatever may await us, we need not be *deceived* as to our character or our fate, and add to the guilt of a transgressor the imbecility of a dupe. A manly spirit, even where ignorance is bliss, will choose the woe of knowledge. That is indeed a pitiable weakness, which fears to face reality, and yields itself to be cajoled by a lie. Cowardice, as the strained vessel plunges like a dying monster, may break into the spirit-room, and drown all sense of danger in blank stupor, or in maniac exhilaration; but Manliness and Reason stand upon the bow, and watch the nearing breakers on the reef of doom. It was a splendid dignity which graced the Roman senate, when, as the barbaric hordes entered the very gates of the eternal city, the conscript fathers, smitten by no panic of useless flight, and roused to no frenzy of vain resistance, listened in calm silence in their curule chairs to the roar of approaching vengeance, and struck Destruction as it burst into the Capitol, with momentary

awe. If the weak and the ignorant brand us, we may let it pass unheeded in our conscious worth. But if an oracle that cannot err denounce our doom, let us not stop our ears, nor resent the threatening. Let us hear it all, and weigh each separate charge, and make our strongest plea, and yield our hopes of refuge calmly, if we must, and realize each coming woe, and meet it at least unsurprised. We need not lose all manliness, though godliness be gone. Let us be honest with ourselves; let us know the truth, even though the searching light reveal every virtue and affection of the soul prostrate in the dust, and Jerusalem "become a heap," and the abomination of desolation stand in the holy place forever! Much more: let us know the worst, and feel it, when amid the lingering echoes of the prophecy that blasted, a voice of promise whispers of returning grace, and a rebuilded glory.

## II.

## General Unconsciousness of Deep Guilt.

"No," answers the just man; "I will not deny my sins, nor that I might be rightfully judged by my Superior — I might have committed greater faults than have actually occurred — but that I never could have become base, I know, as I know my own existence, for it is a part of my own existence, which is no mere transcendental, colourless 'I AM.''

NIEBUHR'S LIFE AND LETTERS, Let. cxxxiv.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

JER. xvii, 9.

## II.

### GENERAL UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF DEEP GUILT.

The purpose of these pages is not to prove, from the letter of the Bible, that human nature is in part or altogether depraved; but to show that such a doctrine, if it is found in Scripture, is not really at variance and irreconcilable with the facts of common life and consciousness. In this essay we meet the objection which is the most universal and plausible. Men, it is true, cannot help but feel that however criticism may explain away its language, yet the word of God does, with most appalling energy and precision, portray the utter evil of the human heart, exhausting all the forms of rhetoric in its stern invective. It declares, negatively, that in the natural mind there dwelleth no good thing; and positively, that the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. It asserts specifically that there is none that doeth good—no, not one. It arraigns every sense as an inlet to corruption, and brands every member of the body as the

instrument of sin; and with fearful analysis, seizing each separate faculty of thought, and each affection and moral capability, it exhibits every ingredient of human character as vile and hopeless. Yet, however we may be stunned and overwhelmed by the storm of denunciations thus hurled upon us, few have failed to realize that these fearful charges have not a corresponding witness within our own hearts. When men brand us, they generally appeal to our own consciousness of guilt, and to the common sentiment of mankind. God himself, in charging home particular transgressions upon men, has appealed to their own sense of duty, and guilt, and shame. But clearly as the Bible seems to speak, the human race, although conscious of much infirmity and of many faults, is certainly not smitten with the remorseful sense of such enormous guilt. That conscience which men have called the voice of God within us, seems to rebuke the so-called doctrines of the written word. The ancient prophet seemed to feel the inconsistency, when, before he declared the desperate wickedness of the heart, he observed that it was deceitful above all things; implying, perhaps, what we shall attempt to prove, that according to the present constitution of things, insensibility to sin-

fulness is a natural accompaniment of sinfulness itself, and grows with its growth. The unconsciousness of sin and guilt, therefore, cannot argue its absence; and the admitted fact in general experience does not invalidate the charge of revelation.

As we wander amid the sublime scenes of nature, or gather around the beautiful creations of art, the spell of our enjoyment is too often broken by the presence of one who has no eye nor ear for their varied loveliness. In every community many are conspicuous, whose dress and furniture, or architecture, or equipage, show an entire absence of that perception of the graceful and the beautiful, of propriety and fitness in things, which we familiarly call good taste. The incongruity would be less annoying, could they be made to feel their deficiency and correct their absurdities; but we feel the hopelessness of the attempt. They may have a generous yearning for the esteem of others, or a timid sensitiveness to inconsiderate ridicule; and these may lead them to sacrifice personal inclination, and to a servile imitation of prevailing modes and fashions. But however they may treasure up rules by which to adapt forms, and colours, and expressions, to the true standard of beauty

and propriety, you can only teach them that they have not a sensibility which others seem to enjoy. You cannot create the personal consciousness of absurdity: that instinctive sense of the ludicrous and unfitting which others feel, and which would enable them to decide rightly in new cases, and which might bring the glow of shame when they transgressed its dictates, cannot be imparted. They may *admit*, but they cannot *realize* their absurdities. Just in proportion to the depravity of taste, are they insensible to the fact. They know it only by faith in the testimony of others.

But if some malicious spirit could lay upon an entire continent the spell of such æsthetic stupor and blindness, the poor victims of absurdity would not only be increased in number, but their self-complacency would be hopelessly secure. Society would feel the folly of the transgressors as little as they feel their own. The only hope of imparting a knowledge of their deficiency would be, that some visitant from a more genial clime, which had somehow a *prestige* of infallibility in matters of taste, might come to instruct and counsel. But even if the very centre of taste should send its delegate to become their guide, how evident is it that they

could not understand the justice of his plain censures. They would unite, perhaps, in believing that, somehow, they were ridiculously at fault, but they would also unite in saying that they could not *feel* it. Only by restoring the taste itself, which might render rebukes unnecessary, could you make them realize their force. Imagine, for a moment, that the round earth were thus bound by a Circean spell, and obviously no thought of the universal folly and degradation would disturb them. Were a messenger from heaven to announce their depravity in taste, he would be met by the same wonder, the same theoretical admission, the same inward unconsciousness of fault. In short, the deficiency might be held as a matter of faith, but never as a fact of experience or consciousness.

Now we aver that, analogous to the operation of this faculty, which wakes the soul to the full power of all that is beautiful and harmonious in the material creation, and all that is inspiring in thought and in sentiment, is our experience of that moral taste, and sensibility to the beauty of holiness and the pollution of sin, which alone can guide us in the way of moral excellence. The laws which govern the one are analogous to the laws which regulate the other. The defective

or depraved moral taste, at each successive stage of deterioration, is attended by a corresponding insensibility to the change; and a total depravity of moral taste would bring as complete unconsciousness of fault. The heart, beneath such a benumbing spell, may, through fear or favour, obey the law of right. It may theoretically admit its deficiencies and practical errors; but the deep sense of its own true vileness it cannot have. And, by the same analogy, if a community, or a nation, or a world, were thus morally defective, there would be no fair appeal against the charge of personal guilt to the moral sentiment of that world at large. It would, of course, sustain itself in its own unconsciousness of its true position. Should a voice from amid the thunders of Sinai, or from the inmost heaven, declare the corruption of the race, reason might demand submission to the verdict, but the truth could not be *realized* by the depraved mind. It must be a conviction of faith, and not of feeling.

We are not saying how it may be in another sphere of existence, or in the life beyond the grave; but reasoning upon man as he is, under the present dispensation of things, certainly observation justifies our conclusion. Sin brings its own insensibility. The most hardened criminal

who awaits the fatal hour, once shrunk from slight transgressions; but as step by step he ventured into crime, his sensibility grew dull, until, while there was much which he still felt to be crime indeed, yet he could perpetrate, with scarcely a thought of shame or fear, villanies that would once have palsied his arm. And now he knows indeed, theoretically, his sinfulness; and can discriminate abstractly, slight shades of wrong, according to principles of moral judgment learned in other days: but he has long since ceased to *feel* them. He can now carouse, and sin, and blaspheme, until all around him shiver with dread, and yet be calm, and think their scruples weakness or hypocrisy. His principles and his sensibility have declined together.

The illustration drawn thus from æsthetics may furnish further instruction, if we observe in those who have but little taste, the distinct elements of a power to see the beautiful, and a desire for the beautiful; and that the perception of what is correct and fitting is far in advance, generally, of the real sensibility to its presence or absence. We meet many whose judgment is tolerably accurate, but their conformity is seldom so exact, even where no special hinderance

prevents it. We can easily imagine, that if to a spell-bound world some slight endowment of returning taste were given, then in a low degree its citizens might judge correctly of proprieties, and could understand the *nature* of a deficiency in taste, although they could not realize the *full extent* of their own defect. If by neglect or abuse they gradually lost the slight sensibility thus bestowed, would it not be fair to argue that, just as their arrangements are now absurd, and would be felt so had they not lost the measure of taste they had; so, while they yet had this measure of true perception, at their best day, they may have been guilty of a thousand follies, which even then they had not taste enough to realize?

May we not say, then, that even if the Creator should give to such a world, utterly sunk in sin, some slight moral restoration, the analogy would still hold good? Might we not expect the same limited discrimination in certain cases, or in certain grades of moral obligations—the same disproportion between the abstract perception of moral beauty and the sensibility which is drawn toward it? And might we not argue, as from the instance of a hardened criminal, that just as he cannot now feel the enormity of his crimes, yet he, as well as those around him, did once feel

their guilt; so he and all of us, in our best days, may have been insensible to wrongs committed, and evil passions cherished, not because their guilt was not real and appalling, but because even then we were still so depraved that we could not feel it?

The argument which we have thus far drawn from the deadening influence of transgression on the moral sense, step by step, is yet more beautifully and forcibly illustrated by the reverse experience of those who are renewed in the love of God. We appeal to the experience and to the testimony of the holiest, in every age. As they became more and more partakers of the divine nature, freed from the depravity which was once their felt nature, they realized with increasing vividness of apprehension how far they had fallen, how basely they transgressed, how fearfully they treasured up just wrath. Then they saw the exceeding sinfulness of sin; and when most conscious of salvation through grace, "quite on the verge of heaven," they felt most fully how lost they were by nature, how near the verge of hell. Nor are such experiences exceptions in the Church; but they are the common heritage of her saints century after century, finding a response in myriads of retired and un-

published Christian lives. The brilliant intellect, the sober judgment, the habitual self-denial, the practical energy, which have marked so many of the moral heroes of the Church, who thus breathe out their feeling, forbid the cavil that their heightened sense of guilt was the result of a blundering logic, or a morbid nervousness, or the pretence of hypocrisy. They leave us to reflect that if we had attained their piety, our purified vision might see things in the same strong light. And, O! when perfect purity of heart combines with perfect clearness of intellect in the world to come, who shall say that we may not fully coincide with the severe judgments passed by Him whose wisdom and purity is infinite? Then may we see the truthfulness of those strong charges of sin and guilt, and the justice of those penalties, which now to the best of us seem oftentimes so obscure.

Let the esteemed reader remember, that the object of this chapter is not to prove the total depravity of the human heart, nor even to assert any degree of guilt, but only to show that under the constitution of things as we see them, the fact of unconsciousness of deep sin has no bearing at all upon the question of guilt or innocence. We may be innocent, and therefore unconscious

of guilt. But we should be as unconscious, constituted as we now are, if we were not innocent. Our moral character or position must be defined upon other authority than that of consciousness, either individual or general. If the sentence of Him whose judgment is according to truth, declare our innocence, "it is God that justifieth; and who is he that condemneth?" But if his plain and solemn verdict be of guilt, then it matters not how severe its denunciations, nor how humiliating its portraitures; we are not free to slight the solemn charge, because the moral palsy that has struck the soul *benumbs* it, as it dies.

But this subject demands further attention. While we boldly assert that *in this life*, and *in our present constitution*, sin brings insensibility to its presence and its guilt, yet we frankly admit that this is not what we should expect. Apart from any observation of facts, the instinctive moral judgment would be, that remorse must inseparably follow sin, and each deeper grade of evil bring its own sting, and each new crime an added self-contempt. Such, moreover, by general admission, is the law of retribution in the world to come—the fate of the wicked soul and the doom of the apostate angel. However

the facts and laws of our present constitution may be too obvious for dispute, and seemingly at variance with the great law of retribution, a brief investigation will show us that the present arrangement is but a temporary suspension of the eternal law, introduced to serve great purposes in the moral government of the world.

For what would be the effect of the removal of such a suspension upon the world at large, with all its variety of moral character; upon its prospects of salvation, and its state of probation? Let one terrific flash disclose to every soul all its deformity and vileness—the meanness of its selfishness—the loathsomeness of its lusts—the emptiness of its generosity—the gangrene of its ingratitude—its hatred, at the core, of good! We know the experience of many who suddenly awake, in part, to a knowledge of themselves. Smitten with a consciousness of moral leprosy, they fain would fly from all contact with life, and groan in solitary shame: or, stung to fury by the humiliating exposure, they only rave in bitter blasphemy, and plunge into wanton crime. Unnerved and paralyzed, they have no heart for life's duties, of labour or of kindness, and sink in lethargy; or else they seek in the hurricane of passion to distract their thoughts from the

intolerable sense of self-contempt. If in others they recognise a purer spirit, they quail before it, or dwell with jealousy on its superiority. If they meet a spirit like their own, they loathe and hate it with vindictive dread. Even though they are drawn by the Spirit of all love; although trained from childhood to expect forgiveness, and firm in faith of all the facts and principles of redemption; although encircled by friends who themselves have tested and proven the faithfulness of God, and who animate their fainting courage, yet how hardly can they credit the idea that they can be forgiven and saved. For all others the stricken spirit deems the promise free. The atonement and its offer he deems universal with but one exception, and that one heart his own. It may have been that a possibility of salvation was once vouchsafed; but it is gone by forever. The sense of insulted justice and of personal responsibility is so pungent, that the idea of a love that would forgive, and above all, of a sacrificial death, with any reference to him, seems utterly incredible; and long and wearily many an awakened sinner mourns before, amid all gospel privileges, he ventures a gospel faith. Yet this is the result of only a partial illumination of only a few scattered individuals, who can

be taught and sustained by others. But what if upon earth's whole population were shed at once that terrific glare, lighting up the loathsomeness of the heart's deepest caverns? The sincerest offer of salvation to the remorseful hosts of hell would seem a mockery and a gibe; and even the forgiveness of man must be a fathomless mystery to Gehenna: a fact the inability to realize which, may alone sustain the hopes and energy of those who oppose the redemption of each successive penitent. It may be that the soul, once let to see its fullest guilt, would find it morally impossible to believe in offered pardon. And even if some did trust the promise, what would earth be with the presence of those who rejected all? So long as men do not realize their moral degradation, many a motive of merit, or pride, or generosity, may avail to check the outward crime; but the full exposure of a man's worthlessness, if it lead him not to the cross, will goad him to a sevenfold frenzy. It is obvious, then, that the apparent exception to the law of remorse and sin is an actual fact; and that to preserve the order and the very being of society, to make salvation credible and probation a reality, there must be such a suspension of the association between sin and the consciousness of guilt. So far,

then, is the general feeling of innocence, or slight sense of danger, from affording any presumption of human innocence, that it were to be anticipated, no matter how depraved we are.

These considerations are heightened by the connexion between the sense of guilt and the fear of punishment. Involved in remorse, yet distinct from it, is the "fearful looking for of fiery indignation," which fills the future with terrible inflictions, as remorse shrouds the present and the past in anguish. Under the felt justice of God's moral government, the conscience always demands and anticipates an exact proportion between the degree of sin and the severity of the penalty; and so instinctively and of necessity does it abide by this rule, that any apparent disproportion in the threatened judgment compels a tacit, if not a definite rejection of its truth. If the threatened penalty be too light, the slightness of its sentence brings no quiet, for more is felt to lie behind; if the penalty be too great, and especially if far beyond the guilt, the threatening is disbelieved, its practical influence is neutralized, and perhaps an indignant sense is roused, as of an oppression which cannot last forever.

We dwell upon this point because, without

doubt, it affords the explanation of many of the avowed heresies, and much of the silent scepticism of the present day, on the subject of future punishment. The diffused spirit of the gospel itself has deepened our aversion to the thought of pain, and our sympathy with others; and men, less accustomed than of old to think arbitrary power, or the revengeful caprice of old authority, a sufficient ground for human oppression, reject also that idea of God which answers all questioning of his ways by a deference to his almighty will. Men who demand nothing more, demand at least *justice* from God. They feel that any excess of punishment over desert were a *wrong* toward the sufferer—a wanton outrage of an eternal law, which the Deity cannot break. They demand, therefore, a punishment *proportioned* to the guilt; and here they are at fault. Where shall they find a standard of guilt and desert? Men cannot calculate moral evil and its due by mathematics; and any demonstration into which the finite mind attempts to bring the "infinite," soon leads to confusion. Men judge by the instinctive feeling of their own hearts. If their sense of human guilt demands not all that Scripture threatens, they will reject it: they may admit the plainness of its language, and the

clearness of its argument; but if the standard in their conscience is a sure measure of desert, then Scripture must be rejected or explained away. The question falls back, then, upon the previous point now under consideration in this chapter; and all their indignant eloquence, and all their fancied security is dashed by the fact, that *our consciousness affords no measure of our true desert.* Observation of human experience shows that remorse is not graduated according to our sin, but is dulled by deepening transgression; and we find that a depraved race under probation, *must be* kept from realizing its full depravity.

For, to resume our last argument, by the same necessity by which we reject all above the deserved threatening, the remorseful spirit needs no revelation to inform it of future woe, but, with an eye it cannot close, glares wildly out on its coming doom. Within the awakened soul, that, like a bark, is swept down the foul stream of corruption, conscience stands with her uplifted torch; and as the sickened spirit turns from the fetid billows of the past and present, the lurid glare lights up the dread abyss to which the tide is rushing on, and each brightening gleam flashes into view more frightful and appalling retributions. The sense of wrath to come

may well combine with a sense of sin, to form a powerful motive to repentance; but if its conceptions of judgment be too vivid, they blast all hopes and crush all energy. There have been instances where a vivid realization of these stern verities, unrelieved and unsupported by corresponding views of an atoning Saviour; or, it may be, pressing on a mind whose mortal frame was much enfeebled, has shattered with one stroke the intellect and the body, and laid the poor wreck in a maniac's grave.

Therefore is it that a race of beings so depraved cannot be permitted to *realize* its guilt, nor its future; but must listen to the revelation which can inform, without overwhelming them. This strange insensibility of ours is like a sheltering cloud, between us and the burning Eye above us; and in its tempered ray we may pursue the toils, and take the slumbers, and perform the kindly offices, which secure a long probation for ourselves, and for coming generations: and yet we may argue from the keenness of the muffled beam, the power of its naked stroke. But if the full fearfulness of the living God should burst forth with intensest blaze, all human strength, and intellect, and energy, and hope, would sink and wither in that blight.

Is it not clear, then, that to meet the very first condition of a probationary dispensation, the human race, if so deeply depraved, must be kept from a due sense of sin and a just expectation of punishment, realized and perpetually overwhelming? If a state of innocence would be attended by the absence of remorse, so also must the state of evil, while yet pardon and salvation are to be offered. The actual state of the human conscience, in regard to its moral position, is as accordant with the supposition of our guilt as with that of our innocence. And therefore the fact with which we started, and whose truth we still admit,—the fact that the strong language of Scripture is not corroborated by the voice of our own consciousness,—affords us no refuge; but we must believe, and act upon, the terrible charges which we cannot feel.

Faith in our own deep guilt, is the necessary precursor of faith in the atoning power of that Sacrifice which none can fully comprehend. It is not needful that the sufferer on the verge of the grave shall be able to *feel* the death-chill creeping over every nerve, and comprehend just how the mortification, which is death-begun, is preying upon his vitals. It is not needful that he should comprehend the whole

philosophy of the remedy proposed. So that the physician comprehends it, and can give to him the sure results—the *fact* of mortal illness, and the *fact* of saving virtue in the remedy—the sinking man is bound to believe both his "danger and his remedy" to be as he who must know assures him they are. To realize the *very process* of mortality might overpower him; but to believe the *fact* may only fit him for energetic action. So the unerring Physician reveals to us the fact of our depravity, and the fact of the power of the atonement; and the highest reason receives and acts upon both by faith.

This same principle, of revealing the true nature and results of sin only as mankind are able to bear it, will be found to have marked the whole course of God's progressive revelation. The glimmering light of patriarchal days, with its obscure hints of the coming Sacrifice, threw its feeble ray only, or mainly, over the temporal and material rewards of transgression, and seems to have left a slight sense of sin. The clear and systematic thunderings of Sinai, graving the inflexible moral law in rigid stone, and with terrific energy denouncing every temporal curse and heavier shadows of a future doom, were compensated and sustained by the pattern of all things

shown to Moses on the Mount,—the shadow of good things to come, the all-atoning sacrifices, and the prevailing intercession. And as the brightening orb of revelation rose, until it culminated above the Mountain of Beatitudes, disclosing all the malignity and loathsomeness of sin, and all the vastitude of its spiritual and eternal retribution, its light shone with an equal ray upon the dying form on Calvary, whose "blood cleanseth from all unrighteousness." The sinner's real nature was not fully disclosed, until his shuddering and averted glance could rest on Jesus. It is the presentation of the sin and the law, in its full revelation, without the corresponding refuge, by which an apostate Church, in every age, has unfitted her most sensitive and earnest souls for life's common duties, and driven them to the cloister and self-torture. And it is by that mercy which spares a useless agony, that it is not until the Christian soul has had much experience of the depth of a Father's love, and clear vision of a Saviour's everlasting priesthood, that God imparts that deepest sense of the sinfulness of sin, which breathes from the mournful but trusting hearts of his holiest children.

But under each successive dispensation, and with all the varying sensibility of each indi-

vidual soul, the fact of man's depravity and danger has been left to the authority of Jehovah's word alone. We may act upon that authority—or perish. The criminal at the bar is judged, not by the voice of his own seared conscience, but by the unimpaired and disinterested sentiment of his jury and his judge. And he who, while yet a "prisoner of hope," derides his Maker's verdict, will not be able to infect the Judge of all with the blindness of his own vision. If we yield to the testimony of God, and strive to act upon its verity, it will impress the soul with a motive which will urge it, without overwhelming it, to the cross. But know thou, O man! that thy unconsciousness of guilt is not thy birthright: it is but the momentary pause, before the final paroxysm of remorse, that in this instant thou mayest take the cup of salvation, and avert it forever!

# III.

# The Temporal Rewards of Morality.

"Moral government consists not barely in rewarding and punishing men for their actions, which the most tyrannical person may do: but in rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked — in rendering to men according to their actions, considered as good or evil. And the perfection of moral government consists in doing this, with regard to all intelligent creatures, in an exact proportion to their personal merits or demerits."

BUTLER'S ANALOGY.

"Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward."

MATT. vi, 2.

## III.

### THE TEMPORAL REWARDS OF MORALITY NO GUARANTEE OF FUTURE BLESSEDNESS.

The argument of the last chapter was purely negative—not designed to prove the depravity of human nature, but only to silence one presumption against the idea of deep guilt. The testimony of consciousness was set aside. But there may be other presumptions which cannot be so easily disposed of. For instance, does not the Supreme Ruler of the world mark his approbation of the right, and his hatred of the wrong, by visible signs of favour or abhorrence? If his threatened visitations of calamity give token of his wrath, must not his crowns of honour and blessing be taken as seals of his esteem and love? Does not God carefully, and with discrimination, reward each successive grade of virtuous action; and would he do it were all grades alike worthless and despised? In brief, is not this constant and minute acknowledgment of the natural virtues and moralities an evidence that there is that in

them which awakes the love of God—a love which certainly is not affected by disrobement of the mortal vesture, and which therefore must continue, and shed its blessings on the life beyond the tomb?

Certainly this presumption has root in the deepest and most intuitive perceptions of our moral nature. The idea of holiness and that of happiness are not more instinctive and abiding than the recognition of their natural association. It is not merely a sense of poetic propriety—of a connexion which, however pleasing, may be lightly broken; but it has been the testimony of the human heart always and everywhere, that by an essential and eternal fitness of things, holiness and happiness *ought* to be inseparable, and the pure should be the blessed. Passion and selfishness may have swayed men to oppression, even of the good; but the soul has borne fearful witness against itself. When no conflict of self-interest prevails, men delight to honour virtue; they rejoice to guard it against suffering, and to multiply its sources of happiness; they exult in its providential accession to high honours and influence; and illustrious examples of goodness have disarmed the rapacity of the robber, and the recklessness of the assassin, and have been spared,

as exempt by right from the common lot and desert of men. And, on the other hand, however averse the heart may be to the infliction of suffering, it finds a strange satisfaction in the retribution which befalls the wicked. The very constitution of human nature leads us to expect this correspondence between the moral character of our actions and their results.

Again, if there is a Being who controls all the events of life, and who is at all interested in our actions and feelings, we may naturally suppose that, whatever may be the moral character of his purposes, he will dispense his blessing or his curse according to his personal favour or dislike toward each of his creatures. And if the principles of his administration be those same principles of reverence for moral purity which underlie our own moral nature, we should expect the correspondence between reward and merit to be so constant that either might be inferred from the other: so that the visible tokens of God's blessing would intimate at once his own goodwill, and the virtue of the human recipient of his benefits. Exceptions might appear; but where regular laws of administration distributed rewards to whole classes of actions, we should seem assured that those actions, as a class, can-

not be the expression of a heart which the moral Governor abhors. Would He, who cannot be deceived by the mere semblance of virtue, bestow upon that mere semblance the tokens of his favour?

So far as national and collective blessings and calamities are concerned, every age of the world, heathen or Christian, has recognised this principle. Famine, War, and Pestilence; the storms that wreck our argosies, and the conflagrations that annihilate the wealth of cities, are all received as messengers of wrath from an avenging Deity, even when there is no natural connexion traceable between the national sin and its retribution: and of course, when the plague is stayed, and prosperity returns, it argues the returning favour of the Sovereign Disposer of events. In all God's dealings with his early Church, these temporal blessings and curses were held out as the sure insignia of his favour or his wrath. "And all these blessings shall come upon thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in basket and in store; in all that thou settest thy hand unto. But if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, the Lord shall send upon thee cursing, and vexation and rebuke, in all that

thou settest thy hand for to do." Deut. xxviii. Every woe that can befall the body or estate is threatened as the sure index of wrath. So in the decalogue there is the commandment with promise—"that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Rewards and punishments are constantly held up in the Scriptures, as the visible tokens of a present discrimination between the pure and the vile. And, in fine, the idea of personal approval or condemnation has been so invariably associated with the consequences of individual actions or habits of action, that the ablest writers on Natural Theology appeal to the ordinary visitations of Providence as the strongest proof, with all its anomalous cases, that the Governor of the universe hates sin and loves virtue.

Surely, then, if we should observe the measure in which the just Ruler dispenses his rewards and his punishments to nations and to individuals, we might appear to have a rule by which to measure his estimate of their actual virtue or vice; and his estimate must be correct. We certainly should find that, as a general rule, those who observe the moralities of life are attended with his blessing; that while the hours of acutest suffering may outnumber the hours

of ecstatic joy, yet the most of life is passed in a tempered state, where a sense of moderate peace and satisfaction predominates over care and pain of spirit. The man of high morality is seldom a really unhappy man. He does not loathe life. Days when social converse or honourable pursuit cannot make him forget his trials, are very rare. Such men smile easily. The trials which they have may be tokens of imperfection; but the preponderance of blessing which they enjoy would seem to be a token of ascendant and progressive virtue, and acceptability before God. Those who charge upon all natural virtues and moralities an utter worthlessness before God, should certainly be called upon to show why the seal of God's favour is not designed to attest his approval, or to say why he ordains such deceptive consequences as lull to sleep the conscience of the insincere and the unsafe. If the temporal rewards of morality are not the Inspector's brand, marking its soundness, what are they?

These questions we propose to answer. We shall show,—

That temporal consequences do not evince the moral character of the *actor*.

That they are designed to evince, nevertheless, the moral character of Jehovah.

That they subserve further purposes in the plan of redemption, and are essential to it.

And, as a preliminary argument, we shall show

That, conceding for a moment that temporal rewards do witness the divine favour, they do not witness such favour as will avert eternal punishment.

We may say with accuracy sufficient, that morality consists in the observance of those duties which a man owes to others and to himself; and which are announced to him either by the voice of revelation, or by the moral sense within him, in view of the relations in which he is placed. But it will give more definiteness to our present argument to analyze morality into its several departments, and to observe the nature and peculiar rewards of several of the separate moralities.

There is, for instance, a physical morality. The word of God, in specific language, or in implied direction, commands a life of temperance in food and beverage, a strict restraint upon the licentious appetites, regular industry and labour, cleanliness of person and apparel,

and observance of frequent days of rest. The general moral sense of mankind has given to most of these rules an independent sanction. Now, although the result of such physical morality is not the sole object of its injunction in Scripture, nor are all the consequences clearly foreseen, where the unaided moral sense enjoins it; yet the sure tendency of such observances is to bring the entire body to that state where all its parts of blood and bone and muscle, of sensitive nerve and organic functions, are fitted in their separate and mutual action to give the frame its highest power of strength and endurance, and fitness for all the peculiar purposes of its existence: and in the mere physical consciousness of this healthful existence, there is a physical happiness. It is not merely the absence of pain and uneasiness, but a positive feeling of buoyancy and exhilaration. And just in proportion as those laws are not observed, there is a corresponding loss of their physical rewards, and a gradual sinking into positive suffering and disease. "Even as we walk the streets we meet with illustrations of each extreme. Here behold a patriarch, whose stock of vigour threescore years and ten seem hardly to have impaired. His erect form, his firm step, his elastic limbs,

and undimmed senses, are so many certificates of good conduct; or, rather, so many jewels and orders of nobility with which nature has honoured him for his fidelity to her laws. His fair complexion shows that his blood has never been corrupted; his pure breath, that he has never yielded his digestive apparatus for a vintner's cess-pool; his exact language and keen apprehension, that his brain has never been drugged or stupified by the poisons of distiller or tobacconist. Enjoying his powers to the highest, he has preserved the power of enjoying them. Despite the moral of the school-boy's story, he has eaten his cake and still kept it. As he drains the cup of life, there are no lees at the bottom. His organs will reach the goal of existence together. Painlessly as a candle burns down in its socket, so will he expire; and a little imagination would convert him into another Enoch, translated from earth to a better world without the sting of death.

"But look at an opposite extreme, where an opposite history is recorded. What wreck so shocking to behold as the wreck of a dissolute man: the vigour of life exhausted, and yet the first steps in an honourable career not taken; in himself a lazar-house of diseases; dead, but by

a heathenish custom of society not buried! Rogues have had the initial letter of the title burnt into the palms of their hands. Even for murder, Cain was only branded on the forehead; but over the whole person of the debauchee, or the inebriate, the signatures of infamy are written. How nature brands him with stigma and opprobrium! How she hangs labels all over him, to testify her disgust at his existence, and to admonish others of his example! How she loosens all his joints, sends tremors along his muscles, and bends forward his frame, as if to bring him upon all-fours with kindred brutes, or to degrade him to the reptile's crawling! How she disfigures his countenance, as if intent upon obliterating all traces of her own image, so that she may swear she never made him! How she pours rheum over his eyes, sends foul spirits to inhabit his breath, and shrieks, as with a trumpet, from every pore of his body, 'BEHOLD A BEAST!'"*

Such, then, are the rewards and the retributions which sanction a physical morality.

There is an intellectual morality—a morality not yet comprehended as such by society, and not specifically commanded in the word of God,

* Horace Mann's "Thoughts for a Young Man."

because its full exercise or rejection is only possible in those advanced stages of civilization and freedom upon which the race has scarcely entered; but a morality destined yet to take its place beside the recognised duties of man, and urge its claims as forcibly, and with as palpable sanctions as even physical virtue. Careful observation, sober thought, close application in study, truthfulness in argument, indulgence of the fancy only as it may sweep through space as the satellite of reason—these will be some of the injunctions in the decalogue of that new morality. And it will have its reward: the quick, clear perception, accurate and ready memory, sound judgment, clearness and reach of logic, and the chastened imagination that, like heaven's light, tints with ethereal colouring the blade, and the ear, and the full corn of thought, and crowns fertility with beauty.

But there is a social morality, recognised from the beginning. The commandments of the second table of the decalogue, explained by the sermon on the mount; the dictates of that social justice which reverences the rights of others in person, or estate, or character, and the minuter and less definable duties, revealed by the diviner radiance that beams forth when Justice is trans-

figured into Love; the palpable and direct applications of these great principles, and the observance of those legislative enactments, and conventional rules, which tend to secure the general peace and prosperity: such are the obligations which social morality lays upon the citizen, the man of business, the philanthropist, and the friend. Its rewards are as generous as its retribution is terrible. Respectability, commercial credit, honour, the courtesies of life, sympathy in misfortune, kindness from those we love. Each moralist reaps a larger share of happiness than he individually gives. Each heart and life in a community, being like a burnished reflector, which, having its proper position and polish, gives its light to the common stock, but gathers a larger radiance from every other; and which, being displaced and tarnished, gives but little, and gathers less. The transgressor lives in a dark atmosphere of legal penalty and commercial distrust, of friendlessness and shame.

There is also a domestic morality—of which we speak separately, because we find it, more than any other, exercised without reference to other duties. Conjugal fidelity, parental tenderness, filial reverence and affection, and fraternal love—how human nature has felt their

beauty and their sanctity, even where religion has not yet thrown over them her holier loveliness! And they have their reward. Amid the sheltering care of the domestic circle, a sacred joy springs up, like a pure spring beneath the clustering palm-trees, an oasis green and cheerful, a retreat and compensation, amid all the heat and conflict of surrounding deserts. The music of happy voices encircling our firesides and our tables—the smile of greeting—the sympathy in sorrow—the nameless little kindnesses that sparkle off from the altar of family affection—the unwearied watching of the sick chamber—and the soft arm of latest devotion, which soothes and sustains us, and aids us to lean securely upon the rod and the staff which now alone can comfort us through the shadow: all these are but the responsive blessings to that love, and care, and gentleness, which we have shown our households—the natural reward of a true domestic morality.

Once more: we may speak of a morality of the passions, apart from actual intercourse and observation by others. It is a Scriptural duty to rule our own spirits, to cultivate the generous sentiments, to repress the malevolent impulses, and to check even the necessary instincts of resentment and justice within due moderation.

Now, apart from the fact that in a well-regulated social state, the gratification of the vindictive passions is most commonly debarred, and the evil affection suffers the pang of disappointment, it has been clearly shown that as each generous and noble impulse, whether it shall succeed or not in its aims, has in itself a sweetness like the glow of a healthful frame, so the malignant passions, however they may be gratified, have a constitutional misery, as a frenzied drunkard grasps the cup amid the tortures of his delirium. "Anger, wrath, malice, envy," like vipers nestling in the bosom, sting the breast that cherishes them, however shut in from outward victims. And, on the other hand, there is no loftier consciousness vouchsafed to the moralist, than to feel his mastery of himself—that his soul is not like a dismantled bark, borne away by every wind and current, but has in itself a controlling power, and, by an internal force, breasts them at its will.

Now we have glanced thus hastily at these several moralities, not to see what they were in themselves, but to call attention to the fact of their *independence* of each other; and that, existing thus separately, no one can be inferred from the existence of the other. You cannot judge

the social character from business habits, nor the intellectual culture from the comparative physical health, nor domestic virtue from public amenity. The banker who never yet failed to discharge his obligations, even when financial ruin threatened, and all around were faithless, may go home to a wife, whose heart his coldness has broken, and to children, who, lost to all reverence, regard his life only as the obstacle to their enjoyment of his fortune. The most amiable and loving of parents, may have no integrity nor credit. In some cases, and to some extent, the moralities may be necessary to each other, and so be involved; as when some physical laws may be observed, to secure mental vigour, or when public moralities are observed through love and consideration for those at home. But we shall be safe in laying down the general principle, that these moralities are independent, and therefore the existence of one cannot be argued from the presence of another; that, at all events, the higher cannot be inferred from the presence of the lower moralities; and that, as they *may* and *do* occur separately, their existence all together cannot argue any connexion of principle.

And, as these *moralities* are distinct, so are their *rewards* separate. Each bears its own fruit,

and each fruit crowns its own tree. The reward of domestic morality is no evidence of public esteem and confidence. So far is physical temperance, and its results, from betokening social morality, that the robust frame thus produced may only call for heavier manacles, and a stronger gibbet. The rewards of all the lower excellences, therefore, cannot argue the existence, nor the reward, of the highest. It is as though each virtue stood upon a separate pedestal, and was crowned with a separate wreath. All but one may stand erect, and their crown witness their approval by the Judge: yet neither these perfect statues, nor their crowns, prove that the noblest of them all may not lie beside them, prostrate and crownless in the dust.

Now, in view of these facts, may we not say, that if there should be added a new department of our being, or a new circle of relationship should gather around us, higher than any yet mentioned, so that there would be a new morality, the same rules would hold? Whether it in any way involved the lower moralities or not, they would not prove its existence, nor would *their* reward prove *its* reward. Just as all but one of the common moralities cannot imply that highest virtue which remains, so all earthly mo-

ralities would not prove the existence of the added excellence and duties, nor all earthly blessings guarantee the new reward.

Now, we aver that there is such a distinct and loftier morality, with its distinct reward. The soul has relations to a God, as personal in being, as definite in his attributes, as any finite soul; and the duties due to him are as palpable as those of any earthly relationship. It needs no argument to prove the profusion and exuberance of his bestowments, the ceaselessness and minuteness of his services, and the benevolence, the compassion, the forbearance, and the tenderness, of the great heart of God; nor need we dwell upon the responsive affection and services which we owe to him. If filial affection be a duty; if ingratitude is detestable; if reverence for the good be incumbent upon all; and if implicit obedience to law, which, with far-seeing wisdom, provides for the common welfare, be indispensable to true morality; then do our relations to the great Father of all spirits, to the Benefactor who makes both nature and human generosity to be but the almoners of his large bounty, to the Holy One and Just, to the Lawgiver whose unerring wisdom guides his perfect love—then do our relations to Him call for as ceaseless

reverence, and love, and gratitude, and for as ceaseless embodiment of those feelings in active service, as any earthly morality. The acknowledgment of our felt dependence and indebtedness, in prayer and praise; the careful study of revelation, and of providential openings, as intimations of His command or wish; the glad consecration of time, and thought, to the filial communion of spirit with Spirit; and the minute watchfulness over all that may meet his favour or rebuke—these constitute a distinct morality. Those classes of obligations which we have before discussed, regard the soul in its relations to the world, or to itself alone: this regards its relations to God. Those human duties may seem to be demanded by conscience, even if there were no God: this higher morality, in all its essential elements of feeling and expression, would abide, in imperious obligation, although all associated existence were blotted out, and but one heart was left alone with God in his universe. Lower duties regard man in his relations to material, visible, and changing circumstances, and may be called the temporal morality: this regards the soul in its relations to God the Spirit, and to the spiritual world, and may be termed the spiritual morality. Now, its observance may

require the observance of the temporal, even as we saw physical morality to be practised for the sake of mental vigour; but as the physical does not prove the intellectual, nor the social the domestic virtues, nor all *but* the highest combined demonstrate the highest of the temporal moralities to exist; so they all, and much less a few of them, cannot demonstrate the presence of the distinct and superior spiritual morality.

And as the moralities are distinct, so are their rewards. The earthly bring earthly blessings; the spiritual, a spiritual recompense. So far, of course, as the great morality implies the observance of the lower, it secures their natural results; but its own peculiar benefits are distinct, and not implied by them. The approving love of God, the sweet manifestation of his presence, his strength and consolations, the conscious assimilation to his character—the fulness of exceeding great and precious promises, bringing a peace that passeth understanding, and a love that passeth knowledge—these are some of those spiritual benefits which yield the highest happiness of which human nature is capable. Now, therefore, as all other moralities in no way imply this loftier excellence, neither do their rewards imply the guarantee of this loftier

recompense. When these earthly rewards, and their virtuous acts, and the relationships which called them forth, have passed away, the question of *eternal morality* and *eternal rewards* will stand, as it does to-day, alone—to be determined by its own evidences.

Thus do we find ourselves led by this hasty glance at the common morality and its rewards, as seen everywhere around us, to the conclusion, that WHATEVER THE TEMPORAL BLESSING AND CURSE, WHICH ATTEND HUMAN ACTION MAY INDICATE, IT CERTAINLY DOES NOT INDICATE ANY SUCH REGARD FOR THE MORALIST AS SHALL SECURE HIM FROM ETERNAL PUNISHMENT IN THE FUTURE WORLD.

The reader may doubt whether *such* a system of recompense can at all indicate God's feeling toward the heart, which is assuredly the same in itself, however daily changes of time and place may call for different duties. Before a man, whom orphanage or other circumstances has left without a home for many years, shall find himself in domestic relations, is not his heart the same as when the gathering circle elicits its expression? When a man, long honoured for

business integrity, and long enjoying the reward of social morality, is by accident or disease shut in from the exercise of these virtues, and from their rewards, to a home that his transgression of domestic morality has made a torment, has that one accident to his body destroyed all God's favour which before rewarded him, and left only the displeasure which afflicts him? Do we not feel, that too often the laws of health and mental vigour, and social morality to a great extent, are obeyed merely to accomplish some vile purpose; and while society and God alike execrate the villain, yet the due recompense still has attended each obedience to law? Must we not deny that the temporal blessing is a sure token of *any* divine benediction on the heart?

The mist that enshrouds the subject may disperse, if we fairly consider that, in order to indicate his approval of virtue, and his hatred of vice, it is not needful that God should in this life let his rewards and penalities correspond to the actual inward virtue of men. The conviction must certainly be impressed on every subject of God's moral government, that nothing but virtue itself, "in spirit and in truth," will satisfy his law; and that, in the end, his retributions will have regard to the motive and inten-

tions alone. But it may not be needful that, *at present*, virtue should be rewarded as virtue, and vice as vice—in the heart. It is sufficient if God attach blessings to those *acts* which virtue *would* produce, and suffering to the conduct which would be the *natural expression* of a vicious heart. Man will soon see what *conduct* brings his chastisements, and what his honours: conscience, the moral intuition of our nature, will suggest and insist, that the *feelings* ought to correspond to the actions; that the heart should, in its pure activity, be the source whence the life flows purely. And thus it was, that while the evident irregularity and inadequacy of the present system of retributions, to meet individual cases, was clearly felt by the ancient sages, and it was only by a future world that they could equalize the desert and the reward, yet conscience declared the necessity of virtue in the intention and affections of the heart; and these providential laws of retributions showed for *what* affections in their action, the blessing was originally prepared. Men felt that so-called virtuous *action* was rewarded, because the virtuous *heart* was *presupposed* in the original plan. Men felt that it might yet be, that a regenerated world would find in those same re-

wards the proper recompense of its real feelings. In the mean while, even if individual justice was postponed, and rewards were strangely administered to classes of *actions* instead of *virtues*, the moral character of God's administration was revealed, and the moral consciousness of mankind was aroused and directed.

Let us pause, and raise a stone to mark the progress of our proposed investigation, and take a new point of departure for the remaining stage of the argument. We have shown that, according to the plan of administering rewards, which is observed during this life, no temporal blessings afford presumption that their possessor shall receive any reward in the life to come. We have shown that these temporal rewards are given to correct conduct, for the most part, with no reference to the inner motive of action. We see that, even where the feeling itself produces a reward, the feeling and its reward may stand alone, and are no indication of that pervading principle of virtue which alone can meet divine favour. We have pointed out the fact that this imperfect system of rewarding action instead of motive does, nevertheless, answer the purpose of revealing the moral character of God and his

government, and the moral duties and prospects of mankind.

The reader will feel, then, that all presumption, which the preponderance of temporal blessings over temporal curses might suggest against the depravity of human nature, and against the absence of any true virtue in general conduct, falls to the ground, when it is considered that the question of the existence of a spiritual principle and of its peculiar reward, is entirely independent of the existence of the common moralities and their earthly consequences; and that a sufficient reason for thus bestowing blessings on human conduct is at hand, without supposing them to imply any approbation of our real character.

We now proceed to show that this temporary system of rewarding conduct instead of virtue itself, however incredible it may seem, as a permanent principle of government, is, nevertheless, an essential part of the only method conceivable, of carrying out the PLAN OF REDEMPTION.

# IV.

## The Comparative Rectitude of Human Conduct.

"Our elegant and amusing moralists no doubt copiously describe and censure the follies and vices of mankind; but many of these, they maintain, are accidental to the human character, rather than a disclosure of its intrinsic qualities. Others do indeed spring radically from the nature; but they are only the wild weeds of a virtuous soil. . . . The measure of virtue in the world vastly exceeds that of depravity; we should not indulge a fanatical rigour in our judgments of mankind; nor be always reverting to an ideal perfection."

FOSTER'S ESSAYS.

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all."

ST. JAMES.

"Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?"

## IV.

### COMPARATIVE RECTITUDE OF HUMAN CONDUCT.

That perfect human life upon the soil of Palestine, two thousand years ago! How it transmitted and demonstrated the pure lustre of the perfect human soul! It was not merely that "never man spake like this man." It was not that "no man ever did the miracles which this man did." Those who have neglected his precepts, and disbelieved his miracles—Moslem and Jew, infidel and heresiarch—all have paid homage to the unearthly beauty and dignity of the Scripture portrait, and confessed, "Never man *lived* like this man."

Action is the natural embodiment of feeling, and the life is the natural exponent of the heart. It is only as our principles and affections are called into action, that we can be conscious of them ourselves; and it is only as their free expression is found in word and deed, that men can examine them. God, at the last, shall judge us, according to the deeds done in the body. His

righteous judgment, assigning to every act and word its significancy of the inward motive, shall mete out our doom. And even as the deeds are being wrought, human judgment, in its imperfection, is not generally at loss. Like an angelic messenger who, unseen, has come, and watches above us, but at our invocation is revealed to our unsealed vision, so the heart, that, from the seclusion of inactivity, comes into the world of language and action, is concealed no longer. The life is the visible soul.

Look, then, upon human life, and say what is its expression! Has it the visage of a spirit utterly abandoned to evil? Take the portrait as history has daguerreotyped it at each successive period, from the infancy of the race until now; and, making all allowance for deficiencies of knowledge and slow mechanical civilization, has the course of national and of private life been all deformity? If the rewards of morality have been unevenly distributed, and form no test of character, let us look at once to the actions themselves. Human life, covering all ages, is like a great dial, upon which is marked the working of the machinery of human nature beneath it; and each separate life is like the second-hand, which, partaking of the general movement,

sweeps around a smaller circle. If, then, with many intermissions, it is true, some backward impulses, and much friction at times, yet still steadily, and with increasing regularity, the hands of action describe that circle of duty, will it not show that the machinery within is more right than wrong, and will move better as time rolls on? If—and we concede the fact—if national legislation and diplomacy, with all its frequent recklessness of right, has many instances of dignified respect to truth and virtue; and if in private life there has even been—as the fact that society still endures bears witness—a prevalence of honest action, and accordance with the moral law, does it not prove that the machinery beneath the surface—the human nature and the single heart—cannot be all wrong, and indeed that it must be mainly right, and progressing? If crime is the exception, must not the spirit that produces crime be the exception also?

In ordinary clocks, when the presence of the weight, or of the spring, is removed, the entire movement is arrested, or retarded; but the great clock of our largest city has an arrangement for securing uninterrupted motion; and thus, when in winding it up the regular force is removed, this "*retaining power*," as it is called, supplies

the requisite force. A spectator, looking at the dial at any one moment, and seeing the movement of the hands, could not say whether the moving power was the regular spring, or the temporary force. Now, if the human heart has no such accessary forces, then the active life is a sure test of the constancy of the original power, of the main-spring of holy devotion to the good. But if there are such forces, then it is only by estimating how strongly and how often they avail without the main-spring, that we may be sure of the unimpaired power of that pure motive.

Now, we think that observation of our own hearts, and of the hearts of others, will make it clear, that there are such secondary motives brought to bear upon the human soul; and that when these influences are taken into the account, the revelations which a close observation of human life affords, are far less favourable to our estimate of human virtue, than at first we thought. These secondary impulses are of two classes: first, those which result from prudential considerations, or, as they are sometimes termed, selfish motives; and, secondly, those impulses which are disinterested, and are commonly called the natural virtues, but which are not religious sentiments. In this essay we shall consider, princi-

pally, the prudential motives, which produce rectitude of conduct.

Let it be remembered that we are not questioning the existence of a purer motive, nor do we now investigate its nature, but we only seek to know its strength. From the scale whose controlling weight sways the human will, we would take out, one by one, the other motives, and leave the love of rectitude to exert its solitary force. It may be that alone it has power sufficient to regulate society and home: it may be that its imperfection needs some slight assistance: it may be that the accessaries are everything, and its unaided power is nothing. We shall direct the reader's attention to these lower motives: of their force, upon his own will, or upon society, let him judge.

Nor would we be understood to brand the prudential or self-interested motives, appealing, as they generally do, to our fear of penalties, with any stigma on their intrinsic character. To shrink from suffering is the first, the last, the constitutional impulse of every conscious being, from the lowest up to God. The power of foresight and of the avoidance of calamity, is one of the most godlike faculties of man. The creative love which spoke into being the tribes of the

brute creation, with consistent benevolence renders them liable to but few ills, and by a blind instinct urges the conduct which secures the present or the future good. But for man, richly endowed with sensibilities to pain or bliss, and liable to injury from a thousand evils, God has made no such provision. To him the Creator, in bestowing his image, gave a portion of his own omniscience, enabling him at once to dwell by memory in the past, and to project his being through the future. With the power to foresee and avert evil, to anticipate and secure the good, Jehovah has thrown upon man the responsibility of his fate for time and for eternity. It is, then, a godlike thing to forecast the future, and secure our welfare in advance. In cases where no other moral principle may be involved, it is felt to be a duty of itself, that we should secure the greatest comfort and happiness both for ourselves and for others. Prudence is thus a religious duty, if it were not a natural instinct. And whether calamity results from the natural course of things, or whether God shall arbitrarily affix suffering to certain transgressions, it is not inconsistent with manliness to estimate it, and to shrink back. It is indeed a puerile weakness, to sacrifice great future blessings through regard to a lesser pres-

-ent enjoyment. It is shameful to give way to obstacles and pains that we may summon our nobler energies to overcome; but it is never felt degrading for men to strike the balance of evils, and number their forces, and at once surrender to a power which cannot be questioned. It is indeed degrading to surrender to any power which commands us to sacrifice rectitude; for, in truth, it is felt that no such power can last, and the right will yet triumph and be rewarded. But when no moral principle is at stake, prudence has an honourable sway. If, in God's economy, religion and interest attract us to the same conduct, it is no shame for a man to feel both the religious impulse and the prudential motive: if he have no religious motive, he may yet as honourably as ever feel the prudential. If he have principle, he may also have wisdom. If he is *not* a saint, it is honourable not to be a fool. Therefore, as we present the prudential motives which impel to rectitude of conduct, whether they be drawn from this world or from that to come, let no one feel ashamed, or hesitate to admit their full influence on his conduct. Let him feel that it is not beneath him to consult his best interests, whether he has other motives to rectitude or not.

To render our discussion more simple and definite, we may leave the consideration of human life and character in the general, and dwell upon the conduct of separate individuals. The moralist may admit that his sense of innocence *may* be pure insensibility of soul, and that the constant rewards of morality cannot be taken as indicating the divine approval; but he may appeal to his actions themselves, his daily life. Here, he may say, is conformity to that law of God which is the very expression and embodiment of moral excellence. Here is conformity, not universal, indeed, in every slight particular, but strict enough in all important specifications. Here is a devotion to the law of right, which amply compensates its forgetfulness of some minutiæ, by the deepest abhorrence of more important violations.

The primary fallacy of this appeal lies in its mistaken idea of the standard by which obedience is to be tested, or a confusion of the two significations of the term, "The Law." If we consider the law of God as a collection of distinct and independent commandments, of equal or varied obligation, each standing on a separate foundation, and involving its own obedience alone, then it will follow that obedience to the

law may be partial, although not complete. Then it will follow that compliance with a majority of its injunctions argues a proportionate devotion, and moral character may be reckoned arithmetically, according to the number of inviolate or broken laws. Such is the view of many correct moralists. Seeming to themselves to keep all but a few commandments, they conclude that their acceptability with God must be proportionate; and while claiming no perfection, they feel that the preponderance of good in the heart and life is so great, that he can but forgive the deficiencies, and reward the obedience.

But, in truth, there is but one law,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" and as God is the very embodiment and personification of holiness, this command is, "Thou shalt love the Holy One and Holiness with all thy heart." This is the one commandment, and all others are only distinct applications of this one rule to the varied circumstances of outward life. This law is like a general direction as to the path of life; and the commandments are like attendants, stationed along the path, at the cross-roads of temptation, saying, "If you step aside here into theft, or there into lying, you will break the law." But step off where you

will, the law is broken. The law is the comprehensive warning,—"Thou shalt not strike thy ship upon the coast of sin;" and the commandments are like beacons lit up on the more prominent headlands; and strike beneath any one of them, and you break the law completely. You have struck the beach and are wrecked, as surely as though you had dashed in elsewhere. Your own convenience, or the natural repulsiveness of some sections of the beach, may have led you to shrink more from some points than from others—but you have invaded the coast, and broken the one law. It is evident that the authority of your master had not force to keep you back; and had no other motives entered, you would as soon have dashed on any other rock, so far as God's will was concerned. Had the shore been equally inviting, and the roar of the breakers equally subdued, and the reef as well concealed, the shore would have witnessed your recklessness of law at any or every point. What is demanded is, a right action from a right motive. That same right motive which rejects one sin would reject all other known transgressions of the divine command.

Consider, for instance, that prudential consideration produced by the restraints of human

legislation. The idea of human law is not to give to crime its just desert. The actual desert and fitness of punishment may lie at the basis of its inflictions, and make them just; but the object of human legislation is, to affix to transgression just so much of the penalty deserved as may make crime inexpedient. Thus the thief must lose more than his booty, and the murderer more than the gratification of his revenge or passion. Through all the long and intricate calculations of covetousness, and malice, and lust, wherever there is a term of seeming advantage, law affixes a negative quantity of larger value,—an evil increasing with the tempting advantage,—so that the result of all combinations shall be worse than zero. The criminal code, incompetent to judge the heart, but compelled continually to devise new snares to catch the Protean forms of vice, is an ever fresh witness of the inadequacy of better motives to virtue. We concede freely that such criminal laws do not presuppose that all the community need their restraint, but only that some do need it. How many do require the check of human law and penalty, is a question for close observation. For the present, we only ask the thoughtful reader how far he would dare to trust society at large

with his life, his fortune, and his sacred honour, if all penal laws were abolished at a stroke? We go further, and ask the calm and serious thinker, how far and how long he dare to trust himself?

But within the range of human actions lie many over which the law has no jurisdiction, and which cannot be specified in statutes. Yet are these actions influenced by a motive more powerful than physical suffering or imprisonment. This motive it is which lends even to the common law and its penalities their most fearful sanction. That sanction is found in the unwritten law, and the informal sentence, of public opinion. That tribunal, bound by no form of the letter, beguiled by no legal fictions, intrudes into haunts which fear no statutes, and condemns vices, and improprieties, and new forms of aggression, with scorn, with exclusion from social privileges, and depression from business facilities. Much of the penalty of social reprobation is not the rebuke of abstract evil, but merely a combination against conduct injurious to the general interests of society, and adjudged on that ground. Now then, take away the restraint of law and the value of reputation, together; place a poor human soul where crime has no

punishment, and where all are compelled to applaud or extenuate his vices, and how long will you trust his integrity, chastity, or benevolence, amid temptation? Why is history a catalogue of great crimes, except that it records the actions of courts and camps, above the reach of censure or correction? Why is Wealth proverbially a reveller and Power a tyrant, but that the one can buy and the other seize impunity? Why is a foreign tour, as a pilgrimage to the Holy Land was said to be in other days, the severest test of virtue to the unrestrained wanderer? How many fall abroad, who stand intact at home!

But we admit, further, that in every experience there are instances of virtuous action not to be explained by any such inferences. Secret, or known only to those whose interest will secure silence and collusion, many an offence might be committed, and many an evil purpose cherished, which is rejected even at much sacrifice of natural feeling. There is even a serious culture of correct life and sentiment which owns no fear of man. Is there never a slavish fear of God, and of future retribution? Is there, indeed, not a reverence for the law of purity, but a dread of its penalty? This principle of action is simply an extension of common prudence into the future

world. Apart from the influence of Christianity, it brings a motive to almost every heart. But Christianity, while it seeks to introduce the one pure motive, has lent an added power to all the other motives. It has given to law its impartiality and steadfastness. It has created a public sentiment around the Church, which rebukes vice with an energy and a discrimination before unknown. And it quickens the natural apprehension of conscience into a fearful looking-for of fiery indignation. In a truly Christian community, this consciousness that the whole future destiny is in abeyance, and all is to be lost or won by this life, penetrates every heart, and, sometimes more vivid, sometimes less, whispers in privacy and earthly security, of the coming doom. But this desire to avert future calamity, wise and blameless as we saw it to be in itself, is, after all, but the dread of retribution. It is only the fear of God, as he happens to be the avenger. Were God inactive, and Satan in the ascendant, and the threatener of the blow, it would be as effective. The motive would be the same; only, as the hand that held it forth was changed, it would be, not the fear of God, but the fear of the devil. Yet is this thought a most salutary restraint to every heart. In times of sickness, or of danger, it be-

comes almost overpowering, withering in its deadly blight the fairest temptations that surround us; and when health and safety reassure the heart, it falls back to a repressed, but constant influence.

Now, these three grand appliances, for the repression, severally, of flagrant crimes, and minor transgressions, and private sins, operate upon the one principle, before explained, of making vice unprofitable or impossible. If they cannot remove the fruit that tempts us, they try to turn its juices into bitterness, or hedge it safe in thorns. And here a most singular phenomenon of consciousness occurs. As it is a law of volition that we cannot will to perform what we know to be impossible, so the heart seldom yearns with much eagerness for new indulgences, beyond its possible reach; and however it may crave a pleasure, it identifies the thing with the aloes in which it is steeped, and loathes its very sight. These considerations have made many vices seem to us, amid laws and a Christianized social opinion, utterly out of the question; and as we neither taste of the evil ourselves, nor see others do it, we grow up in thoughtlessness and indifference, or with aversion to these bitter sins. We seem to feel no

need of legislation to restrain us; we glory in our spontaneous superiority to a gross abomination. The beastly passions of the soul, hemmed in from infancy with bars of stern penalties, brush meekly along their cage, and take their temperate allowance with quiet satisfaction. There is no consciousness of the prey beyond its bounds, no yearning for the victim; and even should the bars be removed, the sense of impunity might not at once be realized. But once let the tigers arouse to feel their liberty, once let them taste of human blood, and woe to the weakness or the innocence which invites the spring of those infuriated passions!

There are several motives of another character, which are not without influence, especially upon those who are least sensitive to the power of fear. There is a pride of character, which must feed its arrogant complacency from some source. It may not dwell on equipage, or personal beauty, or intellectual power; but conscious of the involuntary or factitious character of such honours, it exalts the value of moral excellence, and *glories* in its rectitude. It would *despise* a moral wrong, and a foolish thing, on one and the same principle—they are beneath it. There is a pride which does not even care to

have its superiority acknowledged by others, so long as it feels it to be unquestionable; which exults in haughty secrecy over its elevation in the scale of beauty, or mind, or morals. Sometimes, amid all its contempt for others less endowed with any of these accomplishments, this self-complacency imagines itself grateful to God for its morality, as it does for its high birth, or its features. It thanks God that it is not as other men are: and the man maintains his outward rectitude, not from a lowly and affectionate reverence for the divine will, but as he keeps up the rest of his equipage.

Or perhaps men dream that they can claim, of right, the approval and blessing of their Maker, and feel his respect for their virtues a most grateful tribute, as they do the homage of their fellow-men. God's general benefits toward them being all a thing of course and merit, his further consideration is certainly a flattering compliment. Their failures in action are passed lightly over; they reject any troublesome insinuations of spiritual defects; and they find a satisfaction in the thought, not only that they have a mansion promised above, but that heaven is theirs in *fee-simple*—they can *afford* it;—in short, they are on independent terms with God and man. They

mean, and trust, to be under as few obligations as possible to either.

Perhaps no one case can exhibit the powerful and conscious operation of all these motives, and the unconsciousness of guilt of which we spoke. Imagine, however, that such a pirate as history tells us ravaged the equatorial seas within two centuries, should become so noted and detested, so closely pursued by the multiplying police of the ocean, that he should resolve to gather up his blood-bought treasures, and spend his remaining life amid the unsuspected retreat of a civilized and Christian nation. Presence of mind, a strong self-control, and some natural social qualifications, facilitate the enterprise. Respected as a stranger of business talent and resources, he passes on quietly, until his path is crossed. Upon his own ship he would have felled the intruder to the deck, however just the contradiction; but he is in a land of courts, and prisons, and gibbets, and the murderous purpose is restrained—he merely hates. Time was when every lust had unbridled indulgence; but now the restraints of a moral community are about him, and, beneath the eye of public scrutiny, his habits are conformed to the general standard. He yields to custom and attends the sanctuary,

until, although his secret thoughts once knew no restraint, and while he feels secure from human justice, he trembles beneath the messages of God, and checks the private whispers and risings of his heart. As restraint and temperance become habitual and easier, his longings for forbidden revelry or revenge grow less impatient, and subside—lie like the hungry lion, half-slumbering, half-unconscious, waiting for its prey. He is surprised to find how virtuous he has become; he enjoys the sense of present rectitude, and deems himself too strong ever to stoop again to low appetite and crime. Soon his complacent soul thinks its compliance with the divine law so exact that God can claim no more; and as the past is past, the present must be accepted by Heaven. But now, tell me, viewed in a religious light, has his character changed at all? Let him be recognised, escape, stand again in security upon his own deck, find his temptations all around him without their penalties, and although some thoughts of future retribution might still haunt him, he would hurl them aside, and prove that circumstances, not himself, had altered. As for the love of God, the reverence for a holy law—where are they now? where were they then?

Such, then, are some of the inferior motives which combine to produce the outward life, and the inward restraint of morality. Sum them up, and they are Fear and Pride. These are sufficient to account for virtuous conduct in the great majority of cases, if not in all; and therefore this conduct cannot demonstrate the presence of any motive besides them, if they are known to operate. Of course there may be a better motive. A man may foresee a rich reward, who would have done duty as promptly if unrewarded. But the existence of this better impulse cannot be proved by the mere fact of a good action. It must, in the first place, be a matter of consciousness to the individual alone. Others, if they see duty rigidly done, in those emergencies when all these motives fail, or are turned to favour the opposing sin, will honour the integrity of pure principle. But if we find human virtue graduated very much by the aspect of secondary consequences; if we learn by observation to expect that principle can hardly stand alone, or against inferior motives, then we may conclude that the good deeds are not at all products of good principle. Let the fearful experiment be tried, of the successive withdrawal of all restraint, legal or social, or future, and all

the force of pride, and who is there who would dare to dwell in that community, or trust his own soul? Take away the conscious, and also the unconscious influence of those motives, and how far would the solitary love of rectitude avail without them? Must we not tremble to feel that the great secret of our comparative innocence lies only in our comparative temptation and restraint? Let the latter be removed, and what precept of the whole law would be safe?

Perhaps, however, the moralist who is thus driven in upon that inward sense of his own feelings which is the very citadel of his confidence, may honestly say that, all prudential considerations aside, he believes that in his heart, and in almost every heart, there is a deeper repugnance to some forms of sin than to others. His very soul shudders at the thought of some iniquities, and in that revulsion from those deeper crimes is shown a comparative strength of virtue.

Consider, in the first place, how prone we are to estimate the evil of disobedience by its consequences; and to hold it light or gross, as the results are good or evil. The child who, against rebukes, throws a ball the fiftieth time and

breaks a window, is punished, although not really so guilty in the act, after evidence of parental falsehood, as when he threw it the twentieth time. The press generally denounced the aggressions of England upon China some years since, until the barriers against commerce and Christianity were thrown down, and then the deed seemed sanctified. Undoubtedly the tendency of sin is, to destroy and curse; and the deeper the sin, the deadlier and wider, in *the full result*, will the curse be found. But the immediate and visible results of any one act of sin do not indicate the final sum of evil, and therefore cannot measure the sin. A sin, therefore, with no visible consequences at all, may stand before God in its own intrinsic malignity. God does not judge human judgment: and if my lie, of no immediate injury to any one, is left in all its guilt, even though God calls out from it in the future great glory to his name, how can the slightly varying results which regularly follow here, alleviate or excuse transgression? Such was the estimate of the great Teacher. Hate is murder; lust is adultery; and "he that is unjust in that which is least, is unjust also in that which is much." Here are the three great invasions of social morality, regarding life, chas-

tity, and property, resolved into principles which are declared the same, although the visible consequences are arrested. Yet how many deem the distinction very clear, and seem to shrink from the grosser forms of sin, and, therefore, claim comparative purity. But where God sees no essential difference, there can be none. It follows, therefore, that whatever discrimination of consequences, seen and felt, our aversion to any sin may indicate, that aversion does not indicate any difference in the intrinsic evil of transgressions, and, of course, cannot show any comparative abhorrence of sin.

And, that our natural repugnance to many sins lies not in any sense of their actually deeper guilt, may appear from the fact that this repugnance varies according to the customs of different lands, and the prevalent temptations and consequent familiarity with vices in various communities and circles. There are countries where assassination and licentiousness scarcely awaken more repulsion in the accustomed soul than simple theft or falsehood. The history of duelling is a singular illustration of the power of custom and familiarity to pervert or to create repugnance to one sin, and remove it all from another.

But the true or fundamental ground of the discrimination which in every age men have made between various crimes, and of their shrinking from some vices more than from others, lies in the fact that the Creator, having anticipated our residence here amid this present constitution of things, has implanted an instinct of self-preservation which warns us from many social errors, which are rapidly destructive, by an impulse as strong and as blind as that which guides the mere animal creation, without any reference at all to the moral character of the actions. This is the groundwork of the universal feeling. Acting upon this basis, and observing the different practical consequences of various crimes, society has made a mutual compact for self-preservation, and sealed the voice of nature by the graduated sentences of the law. Thus the crimes which are naturally the most abhorred, are those which society visits most severely. God himself, when legislating as a temporal and national sovereign, availing himself of all temporal sanctions to secure temporal morality, made the same distinctions, only affixing unusual penalties to some few vices which were peculiarly hurtful to his people *at the time*. Of necessity, all these things induce a very strong

aversion, and at the root, a constitutional aversion to many destructive sins. But a *social instinct* is not a *moral perception;* and social penalties have regard, not to the individual guilt, but to the general expediency. We find by observation, that the identical principle which we loathe under one form, under another form is cherished. If, therefore, sin is to be measured by the heart's relation to the will of God, as such, and to simple rectitude, then this constitutional, or educational, or prudential aversion to a comparatively large number of *crimes* argues no comparative aversion to *sin*, nor any comparative purity of heart.

This remarkable provision for the existence of society is further illustrated in the fact, that there are some vices which are naturally destructive, the temptation and the inclination to which are, providentially, excluded, until restraining social influences are called to hold the vices in check. It is remarkable that chastity and temperance are, ordinarily, found in savage life; and while there are no social restraints upon the indulgence of licentiousness and drunkenness, the disposition to them seems to be held in abeyance. It is only as civilization gradually progresses, and legislation guards against the consequences of excess, and a correct public opinion forms a

check, that the individual can invent his means of indulgence, or awakes to his long-unfelt temptations to lewdness or intemperance. The wisdom of this provision by the Ruler of all is seen in those instances where nations, nominally Christian — for only to those nations which *claim* to be restrained by the spirit of the gospel has God trusted the communication of high civilization to the savage—have introduced the obvious and easy vices of their civilization, without being able at the same time to introduce its restraints. The savage tribes melt away like snow beneath that glare of newly-roused passion. As the Creator thus holds some temptations in abeyance, so he brings in a deep repugnance to check the force of others. As the unreasoning horse, with no moral perceptions, and although he never yet has witnessed death or bloodshed, snuffs the scent of blood or slaughtered flesh, and shrinks back in terror; so at all times, or varying according to circumstances, the Governor of our race imparts a repugnance to those *forms* of vice which would destroy at once the existence and probation of this world of sinners.

Thus, let the reader observe that while we take human conduct in its most favourable aspect, yet

we see that other motives besides moral principle tend to make it what it is. We feel how terribly the common life of man would change, if the temporal reward of his actions, and their future penalties, did not restrain him, and keep him even from being aware of slumbering passions. We see how even the general repugnance to gross *forms* of sin proves, not a comparative repugnance to sin itself, but only an educational or instinctive aversion to *those forms*, implanted for a temporary purpose. We shall endeavour in our next essay to do full justice to those amiable and dignified impulses of the heart, which adorn the race, and which certainly are not attributable to any phase of self-love. We pass from the prudential motives to consider the natural virtues of humanity.

# V.

# The Natural Virtues.

"And here the first thing to be considered, and which will at once remove a world of error, is, that this — the doctrine of the corrupt and sinful nature of the human will — is no tenet first introduced or proposed by Christianity, and which, should a man see reason to disclaim the authority of the gospel, would no longer have any claim on his attention. It is no perplexity that a man may get rid of by ceasing to be a Christian, and which has no existence for a philosophic deist. It is a fact, affirmed, indeed, in the Christian Scriptures alone with the force and frequency proportioned to its consummate importance; but a fact acknowledged in every religion that retains the least glimmering of the patriarchal faith in a God infinite, yet personal."

COLERIDGE. *Spiritual Aphorisms.*

## V.

### THE NATURAL VIRTUES.

There are times of depression and weariness of the frame, or of the heart, when the brightest scenes of nature grow dim to our vision, and assume the sombre shadow of the spirit within us. And then again hours will come, when the unburdened soul looks out with a happier glance, and, like an evening sun, throws its own radiance over mountain, and sea, and desert, until the very barrenness of nature grows gorgeous beneath its gaze. So, under peculiar personal circumstances, we look out upon the moral world—upon the character, and principles, and sentiments of mankind. Sometimes, with sorrow and indignation, we turn away and say, "All men are liars." Sometimes, with a full heart, we muse upon the brighter scenes of life, and view it all adorned with noble thoughts, and holy aspirations, and godlike deeds; and we look up and say, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, thou hast crowned him

with glory and honour." But when the passing emotion is over, a candid observation will convince us that either view is extreme and unfair: not that the moral character of the human heart and life might not be radiant with perfect purity, or black with unalleviated putrefaction; but that neither of these possible extremes is realized in the actual state of things around us. Look upon human hearts, not poetically, not theologically, but as they strike you in every-day life,—in business, in society, or at their homes,—and you feel that they are not altogether angelic; nor yet are they utterly fiendish. We do not mean that human nature presents one level mediocrity of virtue or vice; but that, scattered through communities, and through families, nay, often in the same heart, virtues most noble and graceful are found side by side with gross vices and deficiencies, like flowers which spring up together with rank weeds, that poison the very air around them.

And these generous impulses, and right affections, are truly disinterested. They are not the subtle and disguised promptings of self-love. After all the influences which spring from regard to law, or reputation, or the retributions of time and eternity, and from the more delicate

and latent forces of pride, are taken into account, human action, and personal consciousness, attest our possession of spontaneous and independent yearnings to what is pure, and lovely, and of good report. And this, too, independently of religion, if religion implies any prayer and answering assistance from a higher power. Justice, benevolence, gratitude, sympathy, are not poor wanderers from heart to heart, seeking entrance and finding none. They do not wait even for religion to unbar the soul and let them in. Never yet was there a human heart whose earliest and growing consciousness did not recognise the presence of one or all.

Let us dwell for a moment upon the numerous institutions for the relief of physical or mental suffering which adorn our cities, and with humble architecture grace this broad country; and admitting that not until Christianity plead the cause was it fully appreciated, yet remember who have built and sustained them, generation after generation. Whose unpaid supervision holds their interests in trust? Whose hearts have melted beneath the appeal of the advocate that pressed their claims? Whose generous hands have, year by year, replenished the exhausted treasuries? Not the Church-members

alone; but those who, seated by their side, have wept with their tears and given with their benefactions. Nor are they reached through the Church, and by argumentation different from that which is brought to bear upon it. The appeal is made, and it is answered, directly, in virtue of the common sentiments of humanity.

So literature bears testimony to the strength and delicacy of these principles, independently of religion. Comparatively few of the poets, or historians, or even moralists whose works form our permanent literature, have exhibited an experience which would bear evangelical criticism; and yet their noble sentiment, and generous affection, and high appreciation of the pure and the divine, are treasured even by the Church as a glorious heritage; and often has the pulpit pointed its invective or its appeal with their sentences, and the congregation breathed its thanksgiving through their verse. And even the fearful insidiousness with which the depraved novelist seduces the heart by pictures of gross vice half-veiled in the drapery of generous qualities, only proves his own ability to appreciate the good while he loves the evil; proves his sense of the necessity of propitiating the public sentiment which cannot bear unalleviated vice; and proves

that such union of qualities most dissimilar, however unusual in the precise combination of the author, is not infrequent and unnatural.

But we need not look abroad, when at our very firesides these virtues dwell, and make for us—a home. Here we can mark the blending of those contrasted qualities in their first exhibition, and their earliest growth. Here, where as yet the temptations and fearful examples of the great world have never come; and where, on the other hand, no thought of policy or shame conceals the spontaneous thought,

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy,"

and its tones and its pure light seem echoed in the tones of affection and reflected in the unsullied countenance. How quick and clear the apprehension of truth, and right, and love! Amid the diversities of age, and temperament, and constitution, that mark the group which gathers at the parental board, the common affection that binds them to each other beams forth in a thousand acts of childish virtue, recorded only in a parent's heart, or remembered when one link of the golden chain is broken by death. Truth that endures the penalty rather than deny the wayward disobedience, and generous self-denial

that yields whole fortunes of infantile wealth to soothe a weeping playmate, and frank amendment made for passionate vehemence and free forgiveness reconciling the unkind invader of young prerogatives. How much has each to call out our admiration and our love, amid his own peculiar failings; some better trait, some lovelier impulse, some generous emotion, that more than grace of form or beauty of feature wins and seals the affection of our hearts.

And in the growth of years, how these early traits mature and strengthen; and with all the passion, and recklessness, and irritability, and wantonness of youth, there glows a noble enthusiasm, a generous self-denial, a delicate sensibility, and a constant affection. And there are characters in whom the few failings of childhood seem to vanish before the clearer recognition of the duties of life and the beauty of virtue, and the pure spirit, clothed with a form and expression that is a fitting shrine for such a soul, dazzles with angelic loveliness, or in a lowlier vesture shows how

> "Nature crescent does not grow in bulk
> Of thews and sinews only; but as this temple waxes,
> The inward service of the mind and soul
> Grows wide withal."

Even although each may have deficiencies, yet has each his own excellences; and in later years, amid all the confirmed evil, and habitual and conventional wrong, the false sentiment, and the blunted sensibility, the gloom is relieved by many an instance of stern integrity in business, of firm fidelity in friendship, of unexhausted liberality, and of the amiability and devotion which give the sweetness and the sanctity of home.

Nor let it be supposed, that to any peculiar development of civilization or religion, these virtues exclusively belong. Heathenism, in its classic pages, has recorded illustrations of all that is noble and tender in human thought and feeling, and now points us to the millions that people her vast continents for examples of the same universal traits. It is not civilization that has gradually grafted them into the soul; for while barbarism has vices peculiarly its own, and repulsive in their nakedness, there are other virtues which stand with austere dignity amid the simplicity of savage life. Unawed by the prevailing corruption,—stemming the tide of social degradation,—history displays a chastity amid voluptuousness, a clemency in the midst of cruelty, a justice that silently rebuked the wantonness of impunity, and friendship stronger

than death. Ignorance could not blind them; slavery could not fetter them; poverty could not starve them. In the deepest recesses of the vilest hearts that men have execrated as they crushed them from off the earth like vipers, there has yet lingered some one relic of early virtue that would not die; as if to prove that in human nature, in its utmost desolation, the very rocks and sand are not without some bubbling spring, some struggling blades of verdure, though as yet the desert may not blossom as the rose.

Now, we dwell thus upon the universality and beauty of these natural virtues, because in speaking of that which was created in God's image, however it may have fallen, we dare not slander it by reckless invective and railing accusation; because we share the honour and the shame of the common nature, and every stigma upon the one great family recoils upon the shameless heart that taunts it; and because, by plain truth, we would disarm the indignant rebuke that has charged, too justly and too often, an orthodox theology with ignoring all that was good in humanity. "So," said the purest and most eloquent champion and eulogist of natural virtue, speaking of such a theology, "it exaggerates the sins of men, that the need of an in-

finite atonement may be maintained. Some of the most affecting tokens of God's love, within and around us, are obscured by this gloomy theology. The glorious faculties of the soul; its high aspirations; its sensibility to the great and good in character; its sympathy with disinterested and suffering virtue; its benevolent and religious instincts; its thirst for a happiness not found on earth: these are overlooked and thrown into the shade, that they may not disturb the persuasion of man's natural corruption. Ingenuity is employed to disparage what is interesting in the human character. While the bursts of passion in the new-born child are gravely urged as indications of a native rooted corruption, its bursts of affection, its sweet smile, its innocent and irrepressible joy, its loveliness and beauty, are not listened to, though they plead more eloquently its alliance with higher natures. The sacred and tender affections of home; the unwearied watchings and cheerful sacrifices of parents; the reverential, grateful assiduity of children, smoothing an aged father's or mother's descent to the grave; woman's love, stronger than death; the friendship of brothers and sisters; the anxious affection which tends around the bed of sickness; the subdued voice

which breathes comfort into the mourner's heart; all the endearing offices which shed a serene light through our dwellings: these are explained away, by the thorough advocates of this system, so as to include no real virtue—so as to consist with a natural aversion to goodness. Even the higher efforts of disinterested benevolence, and the most unaffected expressions of piety, if not connected with the true faith, are, by the most rigid disciples of the doctrine which I oppose, resolved into the passion for distinction, or some other working of 'unsanctified nature.'"*

How far we are from throwing a veil over any human excellence, and how freely we admit the disinterestedness of these natural virtues, every page has witnessed. We are now discussing, not those moral actions which, however in accordance with the law, are the compulsory services of a fearful spirit, but the moral virtues themselves, recognised and prized by universal consent. And certainly their existence is a fact to be accounted for. If to do justly, and to love mercy, and discharge the duties of our relations in life from the impulse of spontaneous feeling, be not religion, what is religion? If affections whose presence is commended as obligatory, and

* Channing.

whose absence is rebuked as evidence of deepest sin, be not religious, what are they? What relation do they bear to religious principles; and why, in God's economy, are they so universal and so inwoven, that crime and despair can scarcely tear them from our hearts?

The ordinary and most obvious method of meeting this question, and that which Chalmers, in his Commercial Discourses, has made most prominent, even while he elsewhere goes into a more philosophical criticism, is, to bring the claims of Jehovah before the complacent moralist, and bid him feel that, however his debt to *man* has been discharged, he is bankrupt toward God. "The way, then, to assert the depravity of man, is to fasten on the radical element of depravity, and to show how deeply it lies incorporated with his moral constitution. It is not by an utterance of rash and sweeping totality to refuse to him the possession of what is kind in sympathy, or of what is dignified in principle—for this were in the face of all observation. It is to charge him direct with his utter disloyalty to God. It is to convict him of treason against the Majesty of heaven. It is to press home upon him the impiety of not caring about God. It is to tell him that the hourly and habitual language

of his heart is, 'I will not have the Being who made me to rule over me.' It is to go to the man of honour, and while we frankly award to him that his pulse beats high in the pride of integrity—it is to tell him, that He who keeps it in living play, and who sustains the loftiness of its movements, and who, in one moment of time, could arrest it forever, is not in all his thoughts. It is to go to the man of soft and gentle emotions, and while we gaze in tenderness upon him—it is to read to him out of his own character, how the exquisite mechanism of feeling may be in full operation, while He who framed it is forgotten; while He who poured into his constitution the milk of human kindness, may never be adverted to with one single sentiment of veneration, or one single purpose of obedience; while He who gave him his gentler nature, who clothed him with all its adornments, and in virtue of whose appointment it is that, instead of an odious and revolting monster, he is the much-loved child of sensibility, may be utterly disowned by him. In a word, it is to go round among all that humanity has to offer in the shape of fair, and amiable, and engaging, and to prove how deeply humanity has revolted against that Being who has done so much to beautify and exalt her. It

is to prove that the carnal mind, under all its varied complexions of harshness, or of delicacy, is enmity against God. It is to prove that, let nature be as rich as she may in moral accomplishments, and let the most favoured of her sons realize upon his own person the finest and fullest assemblage of them—should he, at the moment of leaving this theatre of display, and bursting loose from the frame-work of mortality, stand in the presence of his Judge, and have the question put to him, 'What hast thou done unto me?' this man of constitutional virtue, with all the salutations he got upon earth, and all the reverence that he has left behind him, may, naked and defenceless before Him who sitteth on the throne, be left without a plea and without an argument."*

Now there is a weakness and incompleteness in this argument, thus brought out so prominently and alone, which will be felt where it is not understood. It appears to make religion to be merely a personal obligation to God, and the guilt of irreligion to consist only in the personal insult to Jehovah, and its penalties to be merely the vindictive resentments of a wounded personal

* Commercial Discourses, Sermon I.

feeling. It seems to overlook the claims of that eternal and immutable principle of rectitude, which the heart may acknowledge to pervade the divine nature and its decrees, but which is felt to have existence, not by virtue of his decree alone, but in its own absolute authority to constitute the very sanction of the Creator's claims, and to leave its *separate* obligation upon all duties which that Creator has enjoined. Our duties of holy feeling toward God, and our duties of holy feeling toward man, may seem therefore to be only different expressions of *the same* great principle of purity and rectitude. Either the pure feelings toward man, or the pure feelings toward God, would seem to prove the presence of that one holy principle which is the root of both. It may be questioned how a heart whose *genuine* earthly virtues prove its devotion to the one great principle of duty and purity, *can* be destitute of all right devotion toward God.

The unreserved praise which Chalmers at times accords to the earthly virtues of morality, while he only charges that one deficiency, of omitting the worship due to Heaven, may seem to admit a converse argument—a plea, that the principle of rectitude which must certainly dwell in the heart from which such virtues flow, can-

not help but affect us rightly toward God. If, therefore, there shall be found a sentiment of reverence, or of gratitude, or of admiration, toward Jehovah, in a heart so crowned with natural virtues, albeit with no direct prayer for grace, then *that sentiment* must be taken as the *satisfactory manifestation* of the same religious principle which inspires the human moralities; and anything beyond this is the requirement of superstition or fanaticism. Every man is naturally and truly religious.

"There is, then," says a well-known defender of the claims of natural goodness, "but one true principle in the mind, and that is the love of the true, the right, the holy. There is but one character of the soul to which God has given his approbation, and with which he has connected the certainty of happiness here and hereafter. There is something in the soul which is made the condition of its salvation, and that something is one thing, though it has many forms. It is sometimes called grace in the heart; sometimes holiness, righteousness, conformity to the character of God; but the term most familiar in popular use is religion. The constant question is, when a man's spiritual safety or well-being is the point for consideration, when he is going to die,

and men would know whether he is to be happy hereafter, 'Has he got religion? or, has he been a religious man?' I confess I do not like this use of the term. I am accustomed to consider religion as reverence and love toward God; and to consider it, therefore, as *only one part* of rectitude or excellence. But you know that it commonly stands for the whole character which God requires of us. Now, what I am saying is, that this character is, in principle, *one thing*. It is. being right; and being right is but one thing. It has *many forms*, but only *one essence*. *It may be the love of God, and then it is piety. It may be the love of men, and then it is philanthropy.* But the love of God, and the love of man, as bearing his image, are in essence the same thing. Or, to discriminate with regard to this second table of the law, it may be a love of men's happiness, and then it is the very image of God's benevolence; or it may be the love of holiness in men—of their goodness, justice, truth, virtue—and then it is a love of the same things that form, when infinitely exalted, the character of God. All these forms of excellence, if they cannot be resolved into one principle, are certainly parts of one great consciousness, the consciousness of right: they at any rate have the strictest alliance;

they are inseparably bound together as parts of one whole; *the very nature of true excellence in one form, is a pledge for its existence in every other form.*"*

Now we shall, for the time being, avoid the difficulty of an appeal to those personal claims of the Creator, which may either be but slightly apprehended by the reader, or which his natural sentiment of reverence and gratitude may seem to him to satisfy; and we shall fall back upon the consideration of that underlying principle of love to holiness and rectitude which is the foundation of all moral affections, both to God and to man. Religion, then, using the word in its widest and popular sense,—religion is the love of virtue, for its own sake—its intrinsic worth. We need not pause to define the nature of virtue:—the intuitive sense of every conscience apprehends it. But we remark the familiar fact, that the love of a truth or a principle is something more than a mere sense of its worth and loveliness. It is a yearning to see it ever realized and embodied in action, and a painful struggle against its absence or its neglect. And so, of course, the love of virtue delights only in its

* Dewey's Discourses. Identity of Religion with Goodness. Italics our own.

presence and its embodiment, and revolts at all which contradicts and excludes it.

But the important point upon which we concentrate attention is, that such a love for holiness, such a taste for moral rectitude, will be *symmetrical* and *universal in its attraction* to the good. The musical ear, endowed with keenest sensibility to harmony of sound, is not satisfied with the accordances of one bar or tune alone, but demands it in every air, and is tortured by the least discordance. The artist's eye, quickened to the perception of an ideal beauty in form and colouring, is patient before no deformity of outline, and no false shade escapes him. The taste for beauty of sound or of form is uniform, and demands perfection everywhere. So the moral sensibility to the beauty of holiness and the discordancy of evil, will be uniform in its application to every duty and every affection. Its aim is, "being right—and being right is one thing. It has many forms, but only one essence." "The very nature of true excellence in *one* form is a pledge for its existence in *every other* form:" and of course its absence, unregretted, unresisted, in any form, argues its absence in every other form, whatever there may be of its *semblance*.

Now this argument is too clear and palpable

to need much illustration. If one should present a bar of iron, which he averred to be a magnet, and whose claims to that title were doubted, the most natural way of deciding the question would be by a reference to the action of that property which constitutes the magnet, by virtue of which it is invariably attracted to all pieces of pure iron, in any direction, and without regard to their shape. So that the metallic blocks were pure, and presented fairly and directly to the magnetic bar, it could not fail to cling alike to all. If it was drawn only to a few, and that with very variable and irregular attraction, it is plain that the attractive power, whatever it might be, could not be that true magnetic influence which draws to *all alike;* and therefore, whatever other properties the vaunted bar might claim, and how well soever its peculiar power might serve some useful purposes, it surely is no magnet.

So let the advocate of the religious character of the natural virtues, and of the demonstration which they would offer of the existence of the pure love of holiness in every form, abide by that principle, that if the heart be a true spiritual magnet, drawn by its attraction to moral rectitude, to embrace it and cleave to it, wherever and however it may manifest itself, then it will

cleave to *every* clearly recognised virtue that adorns our earthly intercourse, and yearn toward *every* duty and *every* pure affection. It will have no irregular and capricious attraction, selecting some virtues, rejecting others—cleaving with blind adhesion to one duty, and letting another go, unresistingly, under any outward force. If, amid virtues equally recognised, and of equal claims, it does reject one or more, cleaving instead to the very vices which are their opposites, then it acts not from a pure principle: all its constant and intense attraction toward a few cannot demonstrate its spiritual magnetism. By its want of accordance with that law of *uniform* attraction, the heart is proven utterly to lack that magnetic love of rectitude. *What it may be*, which thus attracts it in some directions, may be as yet unknown or unrevealed; but it is *not* the love of holiness. How many useful purposes it may serve, and how much beauty and relieving light it may throw over the gloom of human life, is matter of deep thankfulness to God; but it concerns not the argument. It is not the love of rectitude; it is not religion; it will not serve spiritual ends, nor secure spiritual rewards.

Nor will it avail anything in such a case to say that the magnetic force is but *weak*, or as

yet imperfectly developed, for its attraction would still be *uniform in its weakness*, and while it drew to none strongly, would draw to all alike. And so it is nothing to the purpose to say that the religious element is as yet but weak, uncultured, undeveloped, when, instead of a *faint* attraction toward *every* clearly recognised virtue, the heart is drawn impulsively to some, and is all indifference or repulsion to the rest.

Now, we shall not urge upon any heart its want of attraction to that form of excellence and holiness which is highest of all, and charge its want of interest in its duties toward God personally; nor shall we deny that there are many cases of conscience where the moral bearings of action cannot at once be calculated, and that there are modes of exercising every virtue which are only learned by long observation or instruction from others, and therefore the apparent neglect of these duties may result not from the want of religion, but from imperfect knowledge. But leaving unnoticed the lesser actions, and the tributary feelings, let us look down upon the great mountain ranges of duty, and the broad streams of moral affections, that stand out upon the surface of human life. Take the extreme cases, the boldest illustrations of character. Here are hearts

that never swerved from their business integrity, and could not sleep beneath the thought of commercial dishonour, who are yet deaf to all the appeals of benevolence or the suggestions of compassion. Here are men of tender sensibility, of wide philanthropy, and open to every private solicitation of poverty or affliction, upon whose word, nevertheless, you would not risk anything of value. Here are men full of gentleness and consideration, and noble self-denial for their domestic circle, who, beyond the enchanted ring, are, as we phrase it, not the same men. Listen to the utterance of a stranger's name, and there is not one of the obvious and generally recognised of the so-called moral virtues, which you dare warrant him to have, and yet you are firmly convinced that in his character some one of them will be conspicuous. Take the names of six of the leading moral virtues which adorn the natural heart, and the names of the six corresponding vices of character, mix them together, and at random draw out six, virtues or vices, as they shall chance to come, and you have the elements of some character around you—sometimes perhaps a solitary virtue among recognised moral deformities. And how are these moral vices borne by the heart thus conspicuous for

justice, or benevolence? Are they lamented, and repressed with heroic self-discipline, and ingenuous shame? Not at all! They are tolerated, frankly admitted, laughed at, indulged, with the same composure or indifference as the virtues are exercised. In any den where the vicious have herded for crime, in any prison where the law gathers them for punishment, you shall see bright exemplifications of the separate virtues, living and more glorious from the moral death that is around them. From the same eyes the angel and the fiend gleam out alternately.

Now, if it is clear that it is not the love of holiness, or rectitude, which has thus sustained the redeeming quality of historical characters, who have

> "Left a name to all succeeding times,
> Link'd with one virtue and a thousand crimes,"

the case is made out. For although the contrast may be less striking in other characters, yet the spuriousness of the most conspicuous and plausible of these natural virtues has been shown, and all the less conspicuous and less contrasted virtues have no claim on our confidence. The best samples of ore, and seemingly pure nuggets of

gold, having been assayed and found to be dross, the smaller fragments and less valuable ore is included in the investigation.

If, then, integrity goes hand in hand with cruelty, and compassion embraces lust, and affection can take sweet counsel with theft, it is clear that they are not that integrity, and that compassion, and that affection, which came out from God's presence with his benediction, and may lead back the heart to him. They may wear the mask, but they have not the Spirit of heaven. If they should be discovered with only one of hell's vices as a boon companion, that willing association detects and condemns them. If the case should occur that the accustomed vice is absent, or concealed, they cannot draw from the accidental circumstance a proof of their real sanctity. That it is not from any innate want of congeniality on their part that the vice is absent, their easy fellowship on other occasions has exhibited. In short, an examination of the natural virtues demonstrates that they have no root in the true principle of virtue. They may be useful, they may be beautiful; but they are not the affections and sentiments which a spiritual nature would present to view. They differ not in degree alone, but in kind.

Rare characters there are, of splendid combination of all that is noble in such principles, and amiable in such sensibilities; men who seem to have inherited the virtues only of long ancestries, and to stand forth, from very childhood to the grave, as beings moulded expressly to display how grand a soul the common elements of humanity can form, of their unaided energy. Poor human nature! these are thy nobility, and thy kingly ones! And there is not a gem of all the brilliant qualities that flash from their coronet and proclaim their dignity, but it has been *separately* tested—and found spurious!

Thus, without appealing to a consciousness of neglect or enmity toward God—leaving that question for the moment in abeyance—we have examined the natural virtues by themselves, and find in them a want of that symmetry, regularity, and uniformity, which is an invariable attendant on true love of rectitude—true holy principle. The natural virtues are not religious impulses.

We have not yet asked what they really are, nor what purpose they serve. *What they are*, and *why* they are, we may not be able to say; yet we may say what they are *not*. The composition of the spurious coin matters little, so the

assay proves it is not gold. Let us go where we may receive that which will not deceive us. And yet in a few pages we *may* be able to suggest the real nature of these natural virtues, and to show what part they are meant to work in the redemption of the soul.

# VI.

## Relation of Morality to Religion.

"It seems that the Highest Good of the world pursues its course of increase and prosperity quite independently of all human virtues or vices, according to its own laws, through an invisible and unknown power—just as the heavenly bodies run their appointed course independently of all human effort; and that this power carries forward, in its own great plan, all human intentions, good and bad, and, with superior power, employs for its own purpose that which was undertaken for other ends."

FICHTE.

## VI.

### THE RELATION OF MORALITY TO RELIGION.

There is no wide-spread and popular error but there is in it an element of truth, in virtue of which it has its hold on the mind; and so there is a truth lodged within the popular notion of the identity of natural goodness with religion. Because the mind cannot reject this truth that lies within it, the proof of its error, however logically made out, will not be appreciated until the truth and the error are separated, and the error is left alone in its falsity.

Let us say, then, that it is a truth admitting of no demonstration, but an intuitively recognised fact, that when the love of rectitude is the sole principle of the heart, that heart will be filled with all holy sentiments and affections. True, pure love alone fills the soul that yields itself to the service of holiness; and this love is of the same deep-springing fountain, whether its stream flow toward the throne of God, or descend in rivulets of earthly moralities toward man.

Benevolence, compassion, justice—every virtue that can adorn this life—are only separate names for the same principle or affection, guided into a peculiar channel of circumstances, and varying only with the character of the objects among which it flows. That pure love which fills the heart is like the ocean, and as God's attributes of solemn or softer character are more clearly presented to the consciousness, like a varying sky, that sea of love is tinged with solemn adoration, or the tenderness of filial trust; but all is love. And human relationships are like the broken shore about that ocean—lying in varied forms of deep sound or sheltered bay, or inland sea, connected with the one great sea; and from their forms and depths, taking different names, while yet the tide that fills them all is one. It flows among dark cliffs of sorrow, and becomes shadowed into compassion: it flows amid insults and oppression, and their reflected and inverted forms mark its patience, long-suffering, and forgiveness: it glides into the regular and exact enclosures of obligation, and it becomes justice. "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly contained in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And this second command is not only like the first, but requires the same iden-

tical affection; he that loveth God, loveth man —and he only. The ocean of holy love fills the adjoining gulfs of human affections. So a pure soul, new-created, and placed amid the relations of a finite existence, would at once feel the appropriate emotions awake within the heart as each new occasion was recognised.

But what is more to the purpose of this argument, the popular, and we might say, the intuitive sense, is everywhere—not only that a *right* principle secures both pure love to God, and pure affections in earthly relationship, but that a *wrong* principle will *reverse the whole*, and destroy at once not only love to God, but also every separate pure earthly affection. Every one feels that an unholy heart will not be filled with that pure spirit which constitutes the various affections and qualities of human virtue; that a heart destitute of the principles of moral rectitude will not love God, and will not love man; that the same fatal enchantment which changes the great ocean of the heart into enmity against God, would of necessity change the nature of the tide that fills every bay and gulf of human affection. If charity, pure and undefiled, fill the soul with meekness, gentleness, patience, kindness, and compassion, justice and all

that is of good report, then will the heart whose charity is turned to gall be filled with envy, jealousy, hatred, wrath, blasphemies, and every evil affection and impulse. If being right is one thing, being wrong also is one thing; if being right includes all religion, and philanthropy, and human virtues, being wrong includes all irreligion, and unloveliness, and vicious affections. If a perfectly pure heart would fill every relation of life with a perfect virtue and loveliness, then a totally depraved heart would fill every relation of life with vice, and discord, and terror.

Such being the law of spiritual affection, be it good or evil, men feel instinctively that either a perfect purity or a perfect pollution of heart would produce a very different world of feeling and of action, from that which we see about us. And so it would.

It is this one principle that destroys the force of the entire Chalmerian view of depravity. That system represents all the natural virtues and affections as being the unfallen columns of the ruined temple of our nature—it supposes them to have continued the same in nature as they were before the fall—and that the relative

virtues have *in themselves* no moral character at all, but as a religious principle is *associated* with them or not, they are *considered* religious or irreligious. Generosity, benevolence, sensibility, &c., are not the out-growth of a virtuous principle—dependent upon it for very existence—dying when it dies—but are self-subsisting qualities and impulses, which, by mere *contact* with a virtuous principle, acquire a *legal value*. So that, as his own illustration imagines, a world of perfect beings in whom at one stroke the religious principle was swept away, might still continue in exercise of all the moral virtues—"all that is dignified in principle, and all that is tender in sensibility;" the sole change being, that those moral affections were not *associated* with a religious principle, and that the *one* moral affection toward God is *wholly wanting*.

This last exception to the stability of these affections is singular, and ominous of a fatal inconsistency. If want of pure devotion to rectitude may not destroy my disinterested affection toward an earthly parent, why must it destroy my love and sensibility to the character of the heavenly Parent? If we can obey, and reverence, and love a father, without doing it from

moral principle, why may we not serve and obey God, not from moral principle, but from the old, *unaltered* affection, although it is of *no legal value?* Chalmers attempts to show that the consciousness of transgression and of God's character, as moral governor and avenger—of the contradiction of his commands to many of the voices of the heart's desires—creates disaffection toward God. But does observation sustain the theory? Is it by any such *reasoning* that the mind is thus gradually alienated from God—thus made insensible to his claims alone of all the universe—thus roused into a desperate opposition to the rectoral authority? Many men never realize this personal relation at all—they never feel the bitterness of danger, and attempt to suppress it; they simply have no sensibility in regard to the claims of God, as they have in regard to others. The absence of this affection is as original—as spontaneous—as natural—as the presence of any of the others. There are hearts which no hard usage, and no parental discipline, however severe, can alienate; whose love gives acknowledgment of the justice of every blow, and cleaves to the loved mother or father through all punishment and through every change: but where is found this devotion

to God—inspiring obedience, even in hearts that have no love to holiness, as such?

And so it is felt everywhere, that if "being wrong" would not only destroy the *legal value* of love to God, but destroy *the very being of love*, and call its opposite vice into existence—then would it also destroy *all the other* moral affections. In fact, as we said before, moral principle being taken from the heart, the entire ocean of its affection becomes polluted, and every indenture along the coast would feel the immediate stagnation. The purely animal appetites might be unchanged; and even these, being unrestrained by the voice of conscience, would run to excess and ruin—but the moral affections, benevolence, justice, &c., are at once *destroyed*.

What, then, are these natural virtues, and how are they to be accounted for?

Let us, in contrast to the Chalmerian idea, conceive of a world in which, at one stroke, all true religious principle were struck away. Imagine that this world in which we live, with all its advancement in civilization, all its mental culture, all its arrangements to secure the obvious welfare of society, were suddenly to sink into a state such as would result, according to the popular idea, if all moral principle were

extinct, and the race became—totally depraved! Commerce, and trade, and art, and all that system of connected labour which demands mutual confidence and integrity, would give way to the unchecked rapacity and faithlessness which no penalty of mere law could restrain. The social ties that bind men together would wither in the scorching breath of angry passion: home itself, as being the spot where all interests are brought most into contact,—if not of coöperation, of harsh collision,—would be the deepest sink of evil, as the purest flowers are fabled to putrefy the foulest. The attraction that bound man to man, to kindred, to home, to wife and child, becomes the attraction of repulsion, that leaves each soul isolated, and selfish, and hating each intruding and unsubservient soul. Stung with a sense of guilt and self-contempt that makes the soul desperate in its evil; crushed by the dread of wrath that soon must pour its lightning down in rain of fire; hopeless and reckless of relief or recovery; frenzied by passions that burst the frail vessel of mortality, or whirl the mind in tornadoes of emotion; filled with vindictive hate that knows no satiety but in the annihilation of its victim; the multitudes of earth, unless secured by a new gift of immortality, would fall in the

suicide of a frame too frail to hold the violence within it, or in mutual and rapid extermination the race would die out, ere the generation that is in its prime grew old. The gift of immortality, indeed, might keep the present population on its surface; but the conjugal relation, the maternal care, the provision for youth, would all be forgotten: and if new habitants were ushered into life, how terrible the fate! Then would we feel it a feeble portrait of each soul that the apostle draws:—"Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." How would this very world of ours, with all its wonted loveliness of earth, and sky, and sea, and with the very beings who dwell peacefully upon it now, be turned at once, not figuratively, but literally, into a hell of fiends.

Now pause and think! How could a purpose of mercy and a plan of redemption through an atoning Saviour, be brought to bear upon such a race, and be in any sense a valid and

available offer? How, amid the remorse, and fearfulness, and desperation, and tumultuous passion, could any thought be gained to a proposal of renewed allegiance, any faith be secured in its sincerity, any commencement given to the struggle against sin, and any practicable probation afforded during a specified reprieve? Vain were it, when revengeful armies, amid the heat of battle, desperate with mutual hatred and destruction, pause for a charge and onset yet more furious, for a meek messenger to come between, and speak of concessions and forgiveness and love. Vain, even, when a crew of revellers are heated with poisoned draughts, and fired to sensuality and brutal passions, to speak of temperance, and sober joys, and self-controlling mastery. But vainer still, upon this hell-struck world, for one of earth or heaven to speak of pardon and renewed submission, of a clean heart, and a right spirit, and a new probation.

Is it not clear, that some *preliminary* steps are requisite before this practicable offer can be presented?

In the first place, must not God, as we showed more fully in the chapter on the unconsciousness

of guilt, suspend in some way that law by which remorse is ever haunting sin, and pointing to a more fearful wrath? Did we not see that if the consciousness of vileness comes too vividly to the mind, it crushes into hopeless self-despair and unbelief in mercy, or rouses into recklessness? Did we not see how that fearful looking-for of fiery indignation which sometimes glares upon the guilty soul, unfits it for every duty, and for all the offices that perpetuate and civilize the race: like poor Bunyan sitting on the horse-block listlessly, day after day, the very sun that cheered all others seeming to him the burning eye of vengeance? And may we not now say at once, that an essential preliminary to probation would be to deaden this sensibility so far, that while remorse and fear might attest their presence, and teach their lessons, they should not overawe and paralyze the soul?

And then the violence, the sweep, the frenzy, of passion and emotion, must they not be checked? Must not the heart be subdued to some kind of calmness, so that reflection, and a clear perception of things, and a wise decision, could be possible? Not that the soul is to be repressed into a dead calm; but that a restraining influence should go forth over the heart, like oil upon the

tumultuous billows of passion, beneath which the measured swell still betokens the repressed fury of the element, and yet it may not wreck with its impulsive rage every sober thought or better purpose, or human amelioration. So that we say, comparatively, the passions are to be repressed, equally with the sense of guilt and danger.

But even then, while men stood calmly, and without violent repulsion of selfish passion, there would be no social attraction, no sentiment and affection, which, like the pure impulses lost by sin, might reconstitute society, and the family, and all the essential machinery of human improvement, coöperation, and development. And where are those affections to come from? The soul has but two classes of affections possible—the evil and the good: the good are yet unproduced; they are the end to be attained by this plan of redemption, and of course cannot be produced in advance; the evil impulses have just been repressed. What substitute for the soul's true and pure affections yet remains?

Why, if the spiritual nature is thus depraved, and the best that can be done with it is to let its outpouring affections be repressed, so that no really pure and generous emotions can proceed

outward from the essential and immortal element of the soul itself, there can be no resource, unless God has power to impress upon the soul, for *the time being*, impulses which, having no necessary connexion with moral principle, being not the production of the soul itself, are yet capable of leading the will, blindly it may be, to the same outward conduct which would be secured by the intelligent action of pure affections. In short, the soul which cannot in strict truth have virtuous affections, must be impressed with parallel instincts.

Now, without saying that there is identity of character between these human impulses and those which constitute the instincts of the brute creation, we may remark that natural history furnishes us with a singular correspondence between the acknowledged instinct of the brute, and the true and high affection which we conceive to be the natural production of a pure heart. There is hardly a quality which adorns the natural character, which has not a parallel in some mere animal characteristic. Poetry, seeking its analogies everywhere, has found them most obvious here; and even in sober prose, the epithets which are in common use to designate human character, lovely as well as repulsive, are taken most frequently from the

animal creation. Without comprehension of the virtue of truth and honesty, animals exhibit fidelity and candour, or faithlessness and craft; without realizing the moral beauty of benevolence, they are generous, or selfish; unconscious of the spiritual bearings of the sensibilities, they are yet amiable, patient, sympathizing, and forgiving, or the reverse. Utterly ignorant of those considerations of various interests and relationships which may be affected, and which from our point of consciousness throw such a poetic propriety and beauty around their instinctive services or resentments, they blindly yield to those amiable and truthful impulses which sustain the lower animate creation in existence and in enjoyment. Indeed, it is not sarcasm to say, that you might gather an instinctive quality from each of a variety of species, and combine them into a character of dignity and grace. And, provided that the intellectual being may see the beauty and the importance of the relations thus met, and duties thus discharged, this being, without a particle of a spiritual nature, with no real moral character at all—a mere intellectual brute—might go through life and maintain much of its principle and much of its amiability.

Now, the difference between an affectional

instinct and a true affection, good or evil, is the same as that between the mechanical or migratory instincts and an intellectual and understanding faculty. The intellect perceives the facts and principles, and reasoning from these it reaches its conclusions; the instinct blindly and mechanically urges the ant to store, and the bee to build its hectagons and the bird its nest. God does the brute's intellectual work, and gives it the result; and the bare fact that it needs and has the *instinct* shows that it lacks the *intellect.* So the spiritual being, seeing the relations of things, and moved by that one spirit of love which is ready to express itself in all the various relations around it, has its moral affections—springing from the one great moral affection as their conscious root, and having regard to the moral consequences of things; but the affectional instincts of the brute, its sympathy or its fidelity, are mere blind impulses, each independent of the other. The bare fact that God gives the brute these affections or moral instincts, only shows its destitution of that effective spiritual nature which would understandingly lead it to the same conduct. The moral instincts, like the mental instincts, are mere substitutes for the comprehending and intel-

ligent affections and reasoning powers of the soul.

But is it doubted whether such affectional instincts *could* be impressed, independently of spiritual production? Do they seem so constitutional where they exist, and so born with us, that they must cleave to us forever, as a part of our original being? *Can* God add or withdraw them, and leave our spiritual affections, good or evil, alone, to act out their nature?

Consider, for a moment, that form of human affection which has ever been the least variable of all the better impulses that adorn our nature—a mother's love. How, in every new aspect in which it is seen, it gathers new fitness and tender beauty! How every peculiarity of the maternal relation, and the infantile weakness, seems adapted to call out from a heart of holy love that very constancy and tenderness of affection which grace a mother's love. That life to which she has given existence; that form which shall yet bear the likeness of her own features, and inherit the sufferings or the healthfulness of her own frame, and whose living soul—a spark smitten from her own—shall burn

with the true or false lustre of her own peculiar passions; that helpless innocence which seeks its life's nutriment still from her alone, and claims her for its guardian; that ignorance and undeveloped moral being which is yet to be moulded by example and by care to virtue or to vice: how do all these appeal to the pure sympathies and active energies of a holy heart! Yet the bird that cherishes her nestlings has no thought of these relationships; her warm and self-denying affection, toiling and defending day by day, is a blind affectional instinct—serving good purposes, and yielding much happiness—but a mere instinct still. When the young nestlings have grown to strength adequate for self-defence and support, the end is accomplished, and the maternal instinct dies away. So, while the same reasons of expediency which required its strength to watch over infancy, requires its continuance as a social bond, yet is this *human* affection generally recognised as an instinct still. It is not based upon any perception of the relations that give it fitness and beauty. It is not removed when the most obvious inducements to parental care appear to be removed by the offer of another's care, better advantages, and a safer future. In ignorance,

and poverty, and ignominy, and abandoned vice, yea, in imbecility and idiocy, that instinct—lives on.

Now we do not say that this or other affectional instincts cannot be *associated* with a true and pure affection, if the soul itself be purified and free: we do not say that there is *not* such spiritual affection associated with many a mother's love. But we dwell upon it to show how, without any intelligent and spontaneous activity from within, the heart may be so drawn; to show how undistinguishable by consciousness that instinct may be, from the true spiritual love; and how easily, if it stand *not* alone, this instinctive yearning blends with and strengthens the more ethereal affection, and so becomes in whole or in part its substitute. We do not specify, but we only suggest *how far* such affectional instincts of benevolence, or compassion, or fidelity, impressed upon the heart like a maternal tenderness, might, in the absence of true spiritual affections, accomplish the same social results.

It may throw a fresh light over all we have said, and sum it all, to say, that if this earth be a sphere for the development and culture of a

spiritual character, and God designs that the race should be perpetuated, and that each successive generation should have an offer and a probation; it will be necessary that everything requisite for the safety, the life, and the general progress of man, shall be secured *independently of the moral character* of each individual; so that the whole shall move on, no matter how the spiritual life may vary in any soul who comes on or goes off the stage of action.

What further influence upon the soul may be required to fit it for probation, we do not now inquire; but we are sure that a fair platform for further operations may be obtained by these three measures—a deadened consciousness of guilt, repressed passion, and the affectional instincts. These instincts, supported by the systems of rewards and punishments administered in this life, would preserve a true probationary condition.

Suppose that a small minority only of those who come upon the stage should embrace the proffered salvation, and be renewed with spiritual affections; yet the continued system of repression would be needed by them, so long as the spiritual life were not perfected, and would

be demanded in the majority who were rejected, to secure for the few who were chosen a possible field of exercise and discipline, that they may not at once be crushed by the vindictive passions of the incorrigible and rejecting.

And so, if every soul that lives—the entire generation—be doomed, from its perverse rejection of offered mercy, to perish; yet must a prolonged life, and all the amenities and kind offices of life, be secured, in order that another generation may arise, nurtured in infancy, instructed and trained to a fitness for their own succeeding probation and invitation to salvation.

It is not necessary that every soul should be subjected to a complete repression of every evil passion, and be impressed with every moral instinct. Indeed, such universal concealment of the evil would lead men into error. So completely do they confound their affectional instincts with true moral affections, that it is only as the virtuous instinct fails, and no moral affection fills the void, that men feel the deficiency. If every tendency to rectitude of action were secured by an impulse from without, the inward energy of the awakening spiritual affection would have no struggle and no discipline. So that in every character we are to expect some absence

even of virtuous instincts—points on which the soul is left alone, to show its weakness and its evil; and by which others, who are not biased by the consciousness of personal dereliction in that especial vice, may see its naked deformity. If, for instance, one-fifth of the community lacked the instinct of justice or honesty, and so the true spiritual deficiency is made apparent, yet the other four-fifths, secured from that vice by their more favoured impulse, will hold that minority in check by law, and shame, and social penalties against dishonesty. If another fifth be reckless of all truth, yet the very moiety of thieves would join in keeping the liars in abeyance. And thus each vice might have its glaring examples, and every character might reveal a deformity, and the world might realize the enormity and danger of each form of evil, and the blackness of the moral depravity that can combine them all in complete malignity, and yet society would *hold itself* in check, and the world's machinery go on the same; all by the mere distribution of these natural instincts among men, according to a law not more difficult to God, nor any more mysterious than that which balances the proportion of the sexes in the multitude of births.

Recall, now, the steps of this argument. In the last essay it was demonstrated that valuable and beautiful as these so-called natural virtues are—these forms of natural goodness—yet they are not religious affections, and do not spring from a love of rectitude. Yet it is felt that if a holy heart would produce all holy affections, an impure heart could produce only impure affections. These natural virtues, then, demonstrated not to be affections of a pure nature, and yet not corresponding to the affections of a vicious soul, cannot have root in the spiritual nature at all, although they serve many of the same purposes in human life. But now the existence of such natural impulses is explained by the fact that they are necessary to the preservation of a state of things in which the spiritual nature may have a probation and development. And the possibility of such temporary impulses from without is shown by an observation of the instinctive affections of the brute creation, with some of the instincts which are admitted to exist temporarily in the human soul. And the conclusion to which we are driven is, that all these forms of natural goodness, with their attendant rewards and supports, are only substituted and temporary instincts, into which the pure affections may grow

and strengthen, as the bud within the calyx, until life closes, and the instincts are withdrawn, and the pure heart, with its pure affections, needs no more support; or else the doomed reprobate, no longer repressed and stupified, wakes up to the full consciousness of remorse, and the full rage of vile affections.

We have witnessed, along the course of a new railroad or aqueduct, the construction of an arch over a wide chasm. We have seen a frame-work of timber and iron, laboriously constructed, and forming a perfect arch, and then above the heavy beams stone after stone was laid, until the key-stone was inserted, and the arch was done. Then the *false-work*, as it is termed, was taken down, and the stone arch stood in strength to bear the burden of its heavy train or volumed waters. Now, that false-work alone could not bear the burden that would test it; and yet that arch of strength could never have been laid but over that same false-work; and if the true arch is not laid in season, or if it is, that false-work is removed as useless. So this temporary system of repression and instinctive impulses, and temporal rewards — this system, of human morality — is the *false-work* of the practical plan of redemption; the temporary arch, not strong enough to

bear spiritual tests, yet absolutely requisite to the formation of that true holiness of principle and affections, which may endure forever. This false-work stands till death; then it is taken down, and leaves, either the spiritual arch complete, or the blank emptiness of all good.

The natural morality dies away—the spiritual nature is left in irrevocable and complete purity or vileness.

# VII.

## Religious Element in Human Nature.

"I have all along gone on the principle, that a man has within him capacities of growth, which deserve and will reward intense, unrelaxing toil. I do not look on a human being as a machine, made to be kept in action by a foreign force, to accomplish an unvarying succession of motions, to do a fixed amount of work, and then to fall to pieces at death; but as a being of free spiritual powers.

CHANNING. *Self-Culture.*

## VII.

### THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT IN HUMAN NATURE.

Artists keep their pictures from every eye but their own, until the finished portrait can give the complete impression. The writer cannot so guard himself against a momentary prejudice; for the reader's eye is on him, as chapter by chapter he furnishes the details of separate features, and seems to neglect others, or to use too strong a colouring. We have not, thus far, presented a portraiture of human nature. We have only given the background and some shading of its lineaments. A further, and, to some extent, a more grateful task remains. The object of the preceding chapters has been to set forth clearly the startling fact, that the moralities and virtues which adorn humanity at large can be accounted for without reference to any religious motives; and that they must be so accounted for, as they lack the invariable signs of religious principle. But we do not therefore deny that there is a religious element in man, which may be nurtured

and corrected, beneath the shelter of those inferior qualities and motives. We have shown that men may, in the exercise of an intelligent prudence and of merely instinctive feelings, do much to preserve and adorn society; but man is not, therefore, merely a compound of intellect and instinct—a mere intellectual brute. He was created in the image of his Maker, and his *spiritual capabilities*, however perverted, still dignify his character. If it has been a painful duty to brand as counterfeit nearly every semblance of virtue which is common among men, it is now our privilege to point out the true religious element; to show how far those of its capabilities, which are immortal as the soul itself, need only a right direction and culture, and how those powers, which may have been destroyed, can be replaced by divine energy. We wish to survey the whole progress of morality, from the point where it is purely prudential and instinctive, to the point where these lower impulses are lost in the growing strength of a pure religious principle.

I. There are several elements in the religious constitution of man, which are commonly spoken of as indicating a degree of spiritual health and

rectitude of character. Spiritual death, it is supposed, would involve their absence. Their existence is, therefore, held to show that mankind are not yet wholly lost; and the degree of their activity is held to indicate the comparative restoration, or yet unforfeited and original virtue, of the race. But reflection will show us that these peculiar faculties of the soul are a part of its indestructible constitution, *not affected by sin*, but remaining the same in purity or in guilt, in heaven or in hell.

1. Consider, for instance, the power of conscience. The perception of the distinction between right and wrong, involving the approval of the good and the reprobation of the evil, is not only the basis of an angel's moral nature, but is as fully the inheritance of the fiend himself. Conscience, as the faculty which not only perceives moral distinctions and the fitness and beauty of virtue, but also its absolute obligation, is not confined to heaven or earth, but lives unsilenced in the depths of hell. Conscience, especially, as the executive authority, giving due reward to moral action, wields the scourge over the doomed spirit, as it crowns the blessed above. For, if there be not a clear perception of the moral quality of actions, there can be no clear

sense of obligation in regard to past or present duties. If there be no sense of obligation, there can be no sense of guilt. If there be no sense of guilt, no punishment can be felt to be deserved and just, and suffering can only be borne as arbitrary persecution by God. Remorse can have no existence except as it *realizes* sin. But to suppose that the lost angel or the ruined man, has thus lost not only his moral character, but his moral nature; to suppose that if there is a retribution for the wicked, none of it can come through a sense of guilt and shame, but that the doomed soul is as unconscious of guilt as innocence itself could be, contradicts our first ideas of a moral being, and of retribution. It would entirely destroy the appropriateness of a penalty, either as strictly punitive, because then the wretch cannot comprehend its connexion with his sin; or as disciplinary, because it cannot awaken repentance for unconscious error. Conscience, then, is an indestructible element in our nature, destined to live on through every change of moral character. The sense of right and wrong; the prompt approval of the good, and the stern rebuke of the evil; the feeling of positive obligation; the satisfaction in virtue, and the pain in sin: these are the main arteries of a

spiritual being, whose involuntary activity will share its immortality. Whether the action of these faculties shall send through that being a thrill of healthful joy, or of fevered anguish, depends upon circumstances apart from themselves.

Now, in this plain statement of the indestructibility of conscience, in all its offices, lies the explanation of much which has been thought to bear against the doctrine of human depravity. Men see that, under *the present constitution* of things this faculty is most quick and powerful in the holiest souls, and that, as a general rule, each *act* of resistance to its dictates deadens its sensibility and its authoritative power. Under such a system, the utterly lost soul would feel *no* pang and lose *all* discrimination. The existence of *any* conscience seems to them, therefore, a proof that man is not utterly fallen; and the high activity and force of this faculty in many, proves that they are far, very far, from total depravity. But we have shown above that this voice within us is really independent of our moral character; and that the most depraved, so far as our essential nature is concerned, may feel as keenly as the holiest. We showed, in our second essay, that the fact that there is any variation of the

power of conscience, was only a temporary arrangement, and that otherwise all would realize their sin alike. We admit, then, that a veil is placed before the eye of conscience while we are yet on earth; and this veil grows thicker as men persevere in evil. But this variation of feeling only shows that the man has *done* a certain amount of sin since he began; but it does not declare *how depraved* he was at first, nor how depraved he is now. It only shows that the longer he remains in sin, *during probation*, the weaker are his restraints and his incentives to good. He may have been as constitutionally depraved all the while as now, and God may have still chosen to offer salvation, till at length he is left to insensibility. The sinner may be no worse in nature; only he may have persisted in choosing to perpetuate his state, and lost his sensibility to sin. The original perception of sinfulness which conscience has, to see sin as sin, and right as right, is an inalienable power, independent of character; and if the *full vision* in a future state is compatible with the worst depravity, these *lower grades of perception*, now exercised, cannot be inconsistent with it. Therefore, the existence and the power of conscience in men in general affords no measure at all of their

true moral character. No matter how clear their view of duty, how strong the sense of obligation, how painful the self-reproach of transgression, it cannot argue any religious position. We may be misled by thinking of the quickening of conscience as a result of God's spiritual and remedial operation. But however other moral phenomena may show a creative and divine power; and however as men grow up into God's image, the power of this faculty is increasingly manifested, yet it is not by any new creation or awakening of a sense which the soul has lost, that God operates. The Spirit that convinces the world of sin has only need to lift the mysterious veil that He himself has, for the time being, thrown over the eye of conscience—that eye which in its very nature cannot help but see. For conscience, solemn thought! through all eternity, has a lidless eye.

2. In connexion with this fact, it is important also to notice another. The point may for a moment seem obscure, and demand attention; but it will easily be understood, and will save from much error. It is this—that in order to form an idea of any principle, or sentiment, or affection, it is not necessary that we should have

experienced that sentiment or affection. It is enough if we have a *capacity* for those sentiments and affections, and if we have experienced the opposite vices or virtues of feeling. Each right feeling or sentiment is the opposite of a wrong one, and can be understood and judged of by its opposite. Love implies hatred as an opposite sentiment; cruelty, compassion; and forgiveness, resentment. As the stamp or impression is the exact reverse of the seal,—being hollow where it is elevated, and concave where it is convex,—so each duty and each virtuous feeling gives the idea of the vice which is the reverse. Men who never felt the sway of any given affection or principle may clearly understand it in its moral claims, by their experience of a corresponding affection or principle. And so soon as we have an idea of the passion or sentiment, although we have never yet felt it, so soon its moral character and claims are seen, and it is approved or rebuked by the conscience. Thus a soul, pure and unfallen, may have a clear conception of sin, and of each particular evil passion or principle. So it may rightly estimate the character of others, and so it may intelligently be tempted itself. So the divine Man, Jesus, could comprehend sinfulness, and each separate

sin of evil feeling or principle, although he himself had not the slightest personal experience of those sins. But, upon the same principle, a soul impure and disobedient may have similar ideas of the virtues which it does not feel nor exercise, which correspond to its own emptiness and sin. Blot out Satan's memory of the past, and yet he may understand and appreciate duty and virtue, and every shade of obligation, even as Jesus comprehended each sin and its guilt. Now this point is of great importance to a true estimate of human nature.

"All men," says a distinguished Unitarian, "know what God requires of them, what affections, what virtues, what graces, what emotions of penitence and piety. *All men have* a capacity for these affections, and *some exercise* of them, however slight and transient; and what God requires is, the culture, strengthening, and enlargement of these very affections.

"For the defence of this view, I submit its reasonableness,—for, if men do not know what religion is, they do not know what is required of them. Again: *we could not know what are the affections* that are required of us, unless it were by *some experience* of them. It is philosophically impossible; it is in the nature of

things impossible that we should. No words, no symbols, could teach us what moral and spiritual emotion is, unless we had, in ourselves, some feeling of what it is, any more than they could teach a deaf man what it is to hear, or a blind man what it is to see. Excellence, holiness, justice, disinterestedness, love, are words which never could have any meaning to us, if the *originals*, the *germs* of those qualities, were not within us."*

If this were so, it would logically follow, that these germs *are* the religious character—the true religious principle—already formed within every heart. Human nature, therefore, could not be utterly depraved, indeed not depraved at all, only weak and to be developed. It needs no *new creation* of principle and affection, but only a *culture* of what is there already. But, now, if all these right principles and affections *can* be understood without any exercise of them—if, just as Jesus could comprehend the malignity of which he never had the slightest exercise, so an evil spirit may comprehend holy affections which it has never exercised—then the sinner may comprehend the duties and the affections

* Dewey's Discourses on "Human Life," &c. Italics our own.

required of him, although he has not even the feeble exercise, "the originals, the germs of those qualities," within him. It is a clear perception possessed, not only by a holy soul, but by any soul.

Thus, then, the clearest conceptions of various spiritual affections imply no experience of them, and the highest sense of their moral obligation shows only that the lidless eye of conscience sees the truth.

3. The constitutional activity of conscience, and the power to recognise and conceive clearly principles and affections, however diverse they may be from our own moral character, involves another capability of human nature. Distinct from the obligation and authoritative power of virtue, is its moral beauty, its intrinsic loveliness. There is an excellence, a fitness, a correspondence to the highest demands of the soul, which commends itself at once to the heart. Even if duty were not duty, it would still be privilege. If all penalty were gone, and all moral constraint removed, still would the heart feel that purity alone is high and honourable, and worthy the enthusiasm of a noble soul; and accordance with its dictates not only leaves

a sense of satisfied and appeased law, but a glow of elevated delight. This moral beauty bears a relation to moral obligation similar to that which the grace and finish of an exquisite machine bear to its mathematical adaptation for utility. If it were not serviceable, it would yet be beautiful. And with a high reverence we may say that the perception and expression of this quality constitutes the poetry of virtue—the sentiment of religion.

Now, what we mean to say is, that this sense of the beauty of holiness does not require any moral purity, any love of holiness for its exercise. It is an involuntary, constitutional, and indestructible capacity, like the sense of the mere obligation of duty. It is the heritage alike of heaven and of hell. The pure angelic eye sees this moral loveliness resting like a glory on the sublime summits of heroic duties, and on every flower of feeling it hangs trembling like the dew. The irrecoverable soul feels not alone the stern condemnation of his sin; but is sickened by a sense of unworthiness, and deformity,

"And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood."

We are not speculating rashly. Every-day life presents illustrations that ask no flight of

fancy,—cases so clear and indisputable, that they cover all the more obscure instances beside them. They show that to perceive the worth and excellence of purity is not to love it, for to love it would be to seek its possession and to promote its growth. They prove that this poetic sensibility to moral beauty is an endowment given naturally, and in very different degrees to various hearts; and that so far from indicating any love of purity, the sense of moral obligation is often strongest where there is least of this sense of loveliness, and the poetic rapture is often most exquisite where the moral sense of obligation is least oppressive. The writings of genius are, indeed, filled with noble tributes to virtue. It has delighted to blazon her glories and to depict her struggles; to portray the splendid energy with which she repels the base insinuation—the meek endurance with which she bears oppression and destitution—the fearful crisis, when, forsaken, urged to evil, almost overcome, she yet rises, and triumphs, and wears a fadeless crown. Fiction and poetry have given splendid panegyrics, and then writers, and poets too, have shown how abstract their real admiration was, how reckless their actual tone of feeling. They have seemed to feel as though they

could gain their faithfulness of colouring only by witnessing the reality of her trials, and, like the old painter whose magic pencil sought to depict the writhings of Prometheus upon the rock, they bind living virtue to the rack; they watch her agonies, and dip their pencil in the blood, and tears, and death-dews that they picture. Think of Bulwer, and Shelley, and Byron, and the many of polluted genius, who have sent forth the praises of virtue, and many a holy strain, from dens of debauchery and blasphemy, and say, Had they a love for purity? Yet they saw and spoke the beauty of holiness. They gazed in the pause of passion, and admired and sung her chaste loveliness, and then turned to wanton with the deformed vices, that but now were so despised.

It is not for such men that we are writing; but we allude to them to show conclusively that the highest poetic sensibility to the charms of rectitude may be purely constitutional; and that it indicates no earnest sensibility to the obligation of virtue, and no love of rectitude at all. Yet the moral man, especially if highly cultured, and of a poetic sensibility to all beauty of nature, or sentiment, or morals, is apt to feel a peculiar satisfaction and sense of security in

this æsthetic feeling. He is apt to argue from it his advancement in virtuous character. He is prone to conclude that this feeling, clothing his acts of rectitude, proves them to be no compulsory or interested duties. Alas, holiness is lovely! but its loveliness is not more clearly seen by the eye of that pure moralist, than by many an eye from which gleam out the passions that would make a hell on earth! He needs a higher criterion to test his spiritual worth, and his acceptability to God.

II. We proceed to notice the religious elements in human nature, which are not thus indestructible; which need the restoring energy of God to bring back their wonted action; and whose vigour and perfection, therefore, do show the presence of true and efficient religion.

1. We notice briefly the moral sensibilities—all those affections and impulses which are felt to possess a virtuous or unholy attribute. And, according to the teaching of Scripture, there can be no doubt that all the unholy and impure sentiments are attributed to the heart as it is by nature, and all pure and lovely principles and qualities are claimed as the exclusive products

of the Holy Ghost in its restoring power. We have shown, in the first part of the last essay, that this association of pure earthly affections and sentiments with the one supreme love of holiness and of God, and this idea of the invariable connexion of the loss of that holy love with the loss of every pure relative affection, are sanctioned by the general sentiment of mankind, and by the philosophical relation of these sentiments. We argued that the unholy soul *could* have no such virtues, as the holy soul *must* have them. We argued that the one underlying principle being rectified, all would be restored—as the purified and filtered stream that presses through the rock, far below the surface, will well up sweetly through a hundred various springs. And we say explicitly, that the various amiable and noble qualities which should adorn human nature never can adorn it, except by the power of renovating grace. For we proved that the natural qualities *commonly called* virtues, were mere spurious, substituted, temporary things,—mere bracings to uphold this life, until the true pillars of the soul should rise. And the growth of the true virtues, the holy branches of a holy love, is a consequence and a token of the regenerating influence of grace upon the heart.

It may be worth while here to observe how the sentiments of the Church, or at least of prominent writers on this subject, have in modern times arisen and varied. Bishop Butler lived at a time when there was not only little religion, but hardly any morality. Even outward rectitude was a plain separation from the world. Few experiences were there of that spiritual power, which infused new principles and affections, and *extirpated* the evil. It seemed enough if a man could *regulate* his sentiments and desires, and repress the *action* of the passions. Every natural feeling was supposed to be part of the originally designed constitution of man. Regulation, that is, culture, became religion; and Butler's theory has been very easily turned to Unitarian purposes. He held all natural sentiments to have a religious value, if they were only in proper degree and coöperation.

Dr. Chalmers lived under an outpouring of spiritual influences. He felt that the religious principle differed in kind from anything in the natural man; that it involved a love to God and to holiness which had no germ in the unregenerate soul, but must be infused. However, therefore, the natural sentiments might stand in due proportion, by nature or by culture, he felt that

since they could exist without that infused principle, they had no religious nature. Chalmers rested on the idea that the historical virtues, although not religious, were nevertheless the original sentiments and principles of human nature.

But at the present time, especially through the writings of those who would prove the true religious character of natural virtue, attention is directed to the fact that true piety to God, and true virtue toward man, can only proceed from the same principle, and are always found together. If the tree be good, the fruit also will be good. If, therefore, these natural virtues are religious, there must be a religious principle at work. If there is no religious principle, but total depravity of principle, where is the naturally expected fruit of every vile sentiment and passion? The question is serious, and demands an answer. *We* can only say, the evil is *repressed*, and show why; and then show also how these better traits are not our original and immortal qualities, but temporary instincts impressed on the soul. The true spiritual affections and principles—true integrity, and benevolence, and love—are to be a new creation, developed beneath the shelter of these instinctive virtues.

2. But the crowning element in the perfect moral nature is the moral freedom of the will, in its ability to choose the good and to reject the evil. We would avoid controversial expressions; but we may say that in a depraved nature, the will is so diseased, that it does not follow the clearest convictions of duty or of interest. It chooses evil, even when it perceives both its sinfulness and its folly: and in a totally depraved heart it is safe to say, that there would not be the first impulse toward good, as good, which could be cultivated by the law of habit into a moral power. A will so strangely perverted, can be reached only by the mysterious and creative energy of God.

Now it is this imbecility, and bias of the will to evil, which, with the corruption of the affections, constitute the depravity, actual and total, of the human heart. It is the consciousness of this depravity of the will and the affections, in connexion with a consciousness of the obligation and beauty of holiness, which renders the doomed soul wretched, and might "make a hell of heaven." There is perhaps no earthly suffering more intense than that of the lunatic whose spells of criminal and debasing passion come on so violently as to override all sense of rectitude

or decency, and yet leave the wretched victim with an under-consciousness of the purity and goodness which he violates. Yet he may feel that it is but a temporary delirium—a physical derangement. But to wake up to the dread reality of intrinsic pollution and vileness—to realize the loveliness of virtue and the shame of vice, and yet feel the heart pressing onward to new defilement—to feel evermore the circling eddy carry us deeper and deeper into the maelstrom of moral shame, and yet look up to the clear heavens that smile on all above the dread vortex—this, this is the completed curse!

Therefore all the machinery of our probationary state would be useless, if the will were left to itself. There would be no spot on which to plant the lever of moral reformation. And therefore it is with the will, especially, of any human heart that the grace of God must deal, before it can avail itself of the provisions of the scheme of redemption. It is not that divine power should sway the will to holiness; but that once more it has the power to choose bondage, or to choose a perfect freedom. It is not needful to probation that the grace of God should give the will a power to overcome the greater evils and strongest temptations. If the rigour

of its bondage be so relaxed that it can even struggle in its chains, it is sufficient—if it can but seek help from God, it is enough. And thus far the grace of God appears, from reason and from Scripture, to be given to every man, so that he can *resist* the sin that overcomes him, and look up to a divine helper. In answer to his prayer help will come. To offer salvation to a soul without such preparatory grace, would be like holding out the cup of life to a corpse endowed with a consciousness of its death; it would be mockery to the stiffened form that could not take it: but Jesus touches the lips of each soul for whom he died with that cup of salvation, and the slight quickening enables the sinner to take the fulness of his offer, or, rejecting it, to sink back to irrecoverable death.

We have thus reached a point from which we may form a full estimate of the position of moral men, as distinguished from religious men. They are beings entering upon existence with a depraved moral nature, but entering upon a probationary state, in which that nature may be purified for eternity. Their evil impulses are repressed and partially concealed. They have, for the present, instinctive sentiments and affec-

tions, which, in the absence of true and pure principles, may secure continued life, and opportunities for thought and consideration of their great spiritual interests. The temporal blessings and trials of life are, for the present, distributed so as to lend added force to these good natural dispositions. While the sense of sin and danger is not permitted to overwhelm them, yet the indestructible conscience, with subdued tone, speaks of duty and of sin, of heaven and of hell, of the purity they may yet attain, and the moral beauty which may adorn them. Revelation comes in to let them *know* of the truths which it would destroy them to realize. God gives by his spiritual energy a power to seek his help—that the will may be free from its bondage, and the debased affections be made holy and blessed.

Thus much God does for the moral man—without his own agency or his own consent. Whether he will become a religious man or not, depends upon himself. God will do nothing more for him—unless he seeks for more in God's appointed way. If he avail himself of his privileges, it is well; if not, the temporary restraints shall be removed, and he shall be left to unrepressed, unveiled depravity forever.

# VIII.

## Religious Experience—Phases of Conviction.

"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes."

Job xlii, 5, 6.

## VIII.

## PECULIAR PHASES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE—CONVICTION.

The grandest spectacle which the universe affords is that of a ruined spirit reassuming its pristine purity and power. It is the resurrection of the soul—the moment when its corruptible puts on incorruption. Such a transition not only enlists the sympathies of a seraphic devotion, but may well rivet the attention of any thoughtful mind. The purely scientific gaze which wanders through creation, watching with reverential enthusiasm the gradual development of material forces, from the faint glimmering of the floating star-dust, to the full beauty of an organized and furnished world, finding at each step the reward of some clearer reflection of Him in whom they live, and move, and have their being, cannot be insensible to the breathless interest of that hour, when the denizen of one of the least of all these rolling orbs, outcast and reckless in his treason, is brought face to face with the Almighty, is forgiven and

transformed, and made a partaker of the divine nature. How thrilling to watch the momentary changes by which that spirit, under the benignant smile of reconciliation, loses the image of the earthly, and wears the image of the heavenly! But when we know that upon the promptitude and completeness of that transformation in this brief life depends the destiny of all the undying future; when this fleeting hour concentrates within itself all the eternal possibilities of blessing or of anguish; the history of the soul for that one hour is its history forever, and we cannot leave its slightest event unstudied and unappreciated. We would watch the processes of the new creation—the gradual glow and quivering of life upon the countenance of the corpse-like soul.

And here again it is that the true character and relations of moral men in the higher stages of their experience acquire an absorbing interest. The well-defined extremes of character, in those who people the acknowledged realm of Satan, or dwell in the kingdom of God, awake less interest, as their fate is recognised at once; but these dwellers upon neutral ground—these wanderers on the border-land of heaven—swaying between safety and perdition, awake the interest of suspense, and of many a baffled effort to alarm

them. Is there a point within the line which we have deemed the boundary of sin, where in truth they are secure of heaven—who would needlessly awaken their fears? Are they unsafe—who would let them be deceived? The phases, therefore, of an incipient and incomplete religious experience—the processes through which the new life is attained—the intermingling light and shade, which flicker along the horizon ere yet the day-spring from on high bursts on the benighted spirit—this is our theme.

The earliest spiritual exercises which mark the entrance upon a definite religious experience, are the feelings which are awakened in view of the fact which lies at the basis of all religious effort—the fact of our own depravity. It can only be from a sense of its vileness, its guilt, and its weakness, that the startled spirit will ever seek for purity, and pardon, and divine assistance. However the prodigal may, all unconsciously to himself, have been strengthened for his homeward journey, no returning step will bear him onward, until he "come to himself," and feel sadly and wistfully the contrast between his dreary lot and the fulness of his father's house.

Even among the nations upon whom the trum-

pet tones of revelation have not thundered the perfect law and its deepest curse, the smothered voice of conscience bears witness to the common doom. Yet, as we briefly illustrated in the earlier pages of this volume, it is only as the consciousness of sin can be relieved by the revelation of a satisfying atonement and a purifying spirit, that the full sense of evil and of its desert is imparted. The heathen world, therefore, has but an imperfect and vague perception of the moral debasement which crushes it. Its religious observances spring rather from an undefined apprehension of vengeance wreaked by an arbitrary power, than from any recognition of the intrinsic "sinfulness of sin." Its millions suffer much from fear, but little from remorse. The soul naturally recoils from the revelation of its own pollution, and fixes its resolute attention upon the less harrowing toils or follies of this life. So that where the institutions of revealed religion are not perpetually compelling reflection, the habitually averted eye of conscience sees but dimly, if at all, the evils of the heart. The superstitions which have been created by this very wilfulness of self-deluding yet unsatisfied consciousness serve but to confirm the error, and destroy a true sense of moral guilt, by direct-

ing attention only to the outward act, or by proposing, as a propitiation, some easy offering which of itself atones. Yet still the literature of antiquity, and the missionary observations of the present, alike assure us that a sullen, brooding under-consciousness of sin, and guilt, and danger, gleaming out at times into clearer flashes of conviction, is the common inheritance of all men.

But just in proportion as the light of revealed truth shines through a community, and a pure Christian example exhibits a lofty and spiritual virtue, and thus demonstrates its existence and attainability beyond cavil, the natural consciousness of evil, and of an obligation to perfect holiness, forces itself upon every heart. The clear intellectual conviction, at least, cannot be put away. An evil heart, turning from unwelcome truths, and burying its thoughts in business or dissipating them in pleasure, may not seem to believe the stern language of Scripture; but the smothered cries of conscience, the superstitious dread and self-condemnation which cowers beneath calamity as a just retribution, and that abject fear which dares not think on death, all bear witness that the soul does know its guilt and danger, and that it persists in sin and shuts out

clear conviction, only because it chooses to be defiled.

Especially in the hearts of those who habitually listen to the faithful declarations of the pulpit, this sense of wickedness and exposure to a future curse becomes vivid and irrepressible. Sabbath after Sabbath it is deepened imperceptibly; and ever and anon some peculiar utterance of truth seizes the soul, and shoots through it a fearful, sinking, sickening consciousness of sin and peril. The Holy Spirit has left the heart thus *partially* sensitive, and at all times susceptible to the varying influence of various truths and of changing circumstances. Sometimes it suddenly removes yet more of the lethargy which benumbs the soul; and multitudes who listened with but a subdued shame and purpose of amendment, at once awake to a new vividness of apprehension, and a new energy of resolution.

The Holy Spirit is certainly not limited to any regular instrumentalities, nor to any peculiar manifestations, in his work of convincing men of sin, and of righteousness, and of a judgment to come. The wind bloweth where it listeth. And yet, amid all the endless varieties observable in early religious experience, it may be that the self-same Spirit, which worketh all in all, ob-

serves some principle of uniformity in his operation; and a reverential attention to this pervading unity cannot be improper. We may distinguish that which is essential in a true experience from that which is purely adventitious. For, however the peculiarity of many divine manifestations to those whom the Spirit is leading to redemption is felt to have no explanation, except in his own wise choice of action, apart from any influence of the means employed; yet the individual characteristics of temperament and habit, and the natural influence of varied circumstances are usually apparent. A consideration of these may explain many seeming anomalies in Christian experience, and may prevent us from forming a false standard of "sensible experiences," either for ourselves or others.

Consider, for instance, that law of our mental constitution which regulates the tide of emotion in its resistless flow, and in its subsiding gentleness, when any truth or fact appeals to the sensibilities. Observe the heart just startled by the shadow of some approaching calamity, bereavement, or disgrace, or utter destitution; or watch the fluctuating feelings when another's sorrow appeals to sympathy, or another's excellence awakes our admiration. In every case we recog-

nise this rule, that *emotion is strongest when the truth is first seen in its full vividness*, and that it dies away into a subdued sensibility when the first shock is over. Amid the horrors of a siege, or the protracted dangers of the plague, men speak calmly and stoically of fearful things whose first approach convulsed them with terror. Then, if the subdued emotion is to be again aroused, it must be by some more vivid presentation of the coming cruelties, or the heart must be riveted on some new feature of the great sorrow; or, after having sunk beneath the strain of feeling until the weary heart had almost forgot its fate, it must wake up anew to see all it saw before. Thus it is only as a fresh appeal is made, and while yet it has the force of novelty. that deep emotion is to be expected. So also it may be that an emotion, entirely distinct from the one great feeling which has been aroused and subdued, may be stirred by casual circumstances; and the heart, thus approached from another side, and charmed into a tender mood, has a fresh sensibility to even the old appeal, which had seemed to lose its power.

There is an analogy in the exercises of our hearts, in view of the great truths of sin and retribution. When, for the first time, the soul clearly

apprehends these tremendous truths, the natural probabilities are that the sudden shock of guilty shame and fear will be overwhelming; but when the solemn vision grows familiar, or when it has been gradually and by slow glimmerings disclosed to the instructed mind, the natural result will be a subdued, almost unnoticed feeling, while the clear conviction remains permanently. In those notable instances in the history of wide-spread reformations where the general feeling has been most pungent, and the physical effects of emotion most remarkable, is it not usually observable that a previous deficiency in religious instruction, or an imperfectly-exhibited orthodoxy, had left the general mind without familiarity with these great truths, and thus the earnest utterance of them flashed a new idea, like sheet-lightning, over men's hearts? But where the Church has trained up her congregations from childhood, and line upon line and precept upon precept have gradually *dawned* upon the mind, then, in the absence of any adventitious, exciting influences, such overwhelming emotions are not the rule. The same principle may be observed in the case of separate congregations, or even of individuals. The Sabbath-breaker, who straggles into a church, may

be confounded at the utterance of truths to which, in all their freshness and force, his conscience bears witness; while those who habitually listen to those same utterances are not at all excited, however thoroughly convinced. Nor let it be imagined that thus the vicious have an advantage over those more observant of the means of grace; for the open neglecter is generally so surrounded by evil associations difficult to break, that he needs a pungent and startling view to give him an equal vantage-ground with those to whom the form and opportunity of godliness are already familiar, and who need only to ask its acknowledged power.

We said also that the constitutional temperament might vary the form of religious experience. We habitually see how, under the same circumstances, and beneath the pressure of the same motives, and even with the same ultimate action, men of different temperaments differ in the intensity of their emotions, in the vividness of their conception of the same truth, and in the method of their action. While some are confounded, frenzied, or convulsive, in their excited language or gesture, others are made sternly calm, and only speak in a more measured tone, and act with more deliberation. All may see

alike, may feel the same kind of appropriate sentiment, and take the same steps; but the intensity of feeling, the hurry and throng of rushing thoughts, and the vehemence of action, may be peculiar to a few. It is not fanaticism, nor a weak excitability, to be overwhelmed with appropriate emotion; nor is it a sign of a less true and availing sensibility, that a heart as quick to see, and as prompt to act, is not as oppressed with feeling.

So is it, also, with the influence of the circumstances under which, other things being equal, the same truths come home to us. There is an instinctive response of the heart to any expression of emotion in one who addresses us. Even in the quietude of ordinary intercourse, the heart reflects the varying hue of feeling in those around us; and it requires a mental effort to preserve, if we would, our independence of their presence. But when expression is given to the master passions of the soul, and its gathered emotions burst the restraints of conventionality and natural reserve, the rushing tide, as it sweeps across our sluggish hearts, quickens them with its own impetuosity, and turns, and directs, and bears onward every wave of feeling, until the collective emotions of a vast audience roll in one resistless

torrent. As by a mesmeric charm, the orator makes the multitude a part of his own individual being, and they see in his light, and thrill with his passions, and resolve with his will. And when the earnest words are the breathings of a burning piety, the natural power of eloquence is not lost. The emotions may appear to subside when the hour is over; the ripples of gentler emotion may soon vanish, or the great deep of the soul may longer heave in tumultuous energy, and then grow still when the storm is past; but for that brief season the hopes, the fears, the remorse, the resolution of the hearer, are aroused and inflamed by mere contact with a fervid eloquence.

The association with others who are filled with deep emotion has a similar sympathetic influence upon the tone of our own feelings. There is a subtle consciousness of the prevailing sentiment throughout a large audience, or in private gatherings, which none can wholly overcome; a contagion of sensibility which imparts a feeling scarcely to be called our own. Yet the subdued influence of such external sympathies may pervade and modify our entire tone of sentiment. Truths which come home to us amid such associations, come with all the peculiar cast of feeling appropriate to the circumstances.

Briefly, too, we must notice the modifying power of personal circumstances upon our feelings, in view of religious truth. The hour of trial is proverbially an hour of religious sensibility. It is not only that the shadow of affliction breaks the false glare of worldly enjoyment, and shows things in all their naked insufficiency; but the heart, thus subdued and chastened, is made more susceptible to any appeal to its nobler sentiments; and when its feelings are vibrating more quickly and sweetly to any touch, there is a peculiar sensibility to the touch of eternal truth. And whatever circumstances suggest, of themselves, the great truths of our mortality, our helplessness, or our need of divine communion, combine and blend their peculiar emotions with the power of the religious truth that may be presented with them.

Now, these natural feelings are not to be considered as entirely religious emotions, yet religious feeling is almost invariably associated with them. The excitement may afterward be proven to have been merely adventitious; or, as it dies away, the religious sensibility may be found but feeble in its independent strength: yet it is the Spirit of God which gives the heart, whose emotion is communicated to us, these same spiritual

emotions, and which has given to us some religious susceptibility; and that Spirit, acting through these natural instrumentalities, lends them a supernatural power. These emotional influences, even if they do die away, are not to be discredited or neglected, if they lead the heart to abiding spiritual impressions. Well, indeed, is it for us if, amid our heedlessness, a human sympathy and an earthly sorrow, as we open our hearts to receive them, may let the countenance of Him who long has stood at the door and knocked, meet our gaze, and his voice of rebuke and promise come, for the moment at least, with more persuasive power.

It may be well also to notice the fact, that there is a great difference between a sense of the sinfulness of our nature and a sense of the guilt of actual crimes which we have done. We may all acknowledge the guilt of evil desires, of malicious passions, and of low motives; we may even be conscious that outward influences alone prevent indulgence in transgression; and yet, when outward freedom does give opportunity for action, and the deed is done, the startled soul is abashed and revolted by the very sin which it has long cherished. We allude to the fact only to illustrate the way in which the convictions of

those whose lives have been marked by open and definite crimes, are likely to be more sharp and vivid, when once aroused, than the convictions of men who, under the restraints of morality, have sinned only in spirit and in negative transgression. The moralist cannot so fix his gaze on specific acts in which the whole sin of his life seems concentrated, and so he may be less agitated by remorse; but the clearer teaching, which is generally around him in his less disturbed life, may bring to him a more just conviction of the *pervading* evil of his heart.

The same influences which vary the intensity of emotion, may also affect the nature of the sentiment thus awakened by the convincing Spirit. Sometimes the sense of sin is the only or the chief thought which oppresses the soul; sometimes God brings a strange fearfulness of vengeance, and from the trembling apprehension of the gathering storm, leads men to think upon the sin which soon will bid it burst upon them. Sometimes, through direct spiritual agency, or through the vivid portraitures of one who sees the "terrors of the Lord," and the helplessness of the guilty spirit, that spirit may be all absorbed by the one thought of escaping the wrath to come; and even when

its gaze is turned inward on the real evil of sin itself, and while it seeks purity for its own sake, still the vivid impression of the damnation that slumbereth not may so haunt it that, to the end, *fear* is an overwhelming emotion. In other experiences, the soul, directed first to the "sinfulness of sin," may indeed feel the associated sense of danger, but the habitual expectation of final forgiveness, and the soothing influence of the Holy Spirit, who would use fear only as a step toward penitence, may keep the emotion of terror subdued and almost unnoticed. It matters not, so that the calmer penitent forbear to charge it on his trembling brother, who shudders beneath the uplifted stroke, that his prayer is the cry of fear alone; so that one who has passed through terror into peace, impugn not the silent but bitter consciousness of one so filled with a sense of his crime, as he stands upon the scaffold of time, that he scarcely heeds the executioner, and pleads not so much to be unpunished as to be forgiven.

We have thus seen through what varied phases of experience God may bring the soul to see more clearly its need of salvation; either by an immediate impression of guilt, or by a conviction in connexion with a dread of the judg-

ment to come. There is an experience less strongly marked, by which God leads thousands to the same point. Those stern convictions do, indeed, often break in harshly upon the business and amusements of a life which seems bright and satisfying, if only it were undisturbed by their intrusion. But sometimes they do not break in roughly. The heart, left to its idols, finds the pursuits of life grow unsatisfying and its pleasures pall upon the weary spirit, until in loneliness, and emptiness, and almost despair, it seeks a surer resting-place, and feels its need of a Father and a God, and sees its own unfitness to commune and be a child. There comes no thunder-cloud to scathe our paradise; but, beneath a serene sky the Eden fades, and wilts away, and we, looking wistfully upward to an inheritance that fadeth not, feel that we are of the earth, earthy, and cannot soar away. Friends die, or scatter, or grow cold; disease wastes the natural energy, and shuts us in from the common circle; poverty comes round us; early ambitions fail; the tinsel and the trickery of life are shown; we see ourselves! We ask, How long is this to last? We look deathward—and feel we need a change ere then. Sermon, and Bible, and inward monitions tell us of One "who satisfieth the longing

soul." We feel that we are separate from God. We feel more and more, that in his presence we dare not speak of any virtue. We are penetrated with a sense of utter unworthiness. We are convinced of sin.

The reader will now, we trust, understand that all these phases of experience are but accidents, and that the only thing essential is, the *knowledge* of our sin and danger. To every heart that knowledge is given, and acting on that knowledge it may seek and find redemption. Let the reader remember that, while the Spirit *may* work upon his heart, even beyond ordinary rules, in the suddenness or energy of its power, yet he cannot rely upon any such special operation to rouse his sense of sin, for no promise of it is given. Let him not wait for the coming of those more vivid apprehensions and severe lessons of which we have spoken: they may never come to him. He is *convinced* of his condition, however little he *feels* it. If ever he feel more deeply, it is well; but whether he shall feel or not, he may *act* upon his conviction. Action on that conviction will save him; and, if inactive, that conviction will damn him.

We dwell upon this point, because, owing to causes similar to those alluded to above, a large

number of those cases of bright religious experience which have attracted attention, especially in some denominations, have been preceded by a sudden and new apprehension of sin and wrath, by intense emotions of fear and shame, by sudden conflict, bitter and brief. These boldly-outlined instances have been made a standard by their subjects and by others. Such emotions and vivid apprehension have been deemed an invariable accompaniment of any spiritual impressions, and an absolute prerequisite to prayer for pardon. Meanwhile thousands have sought and found relief without any such marked emotional experience. Yet thousands are held back from prayer and duty, to await some convulsion of feeling. Let them know that there is not one single degree or peculiarity of experience attending conviction, from the merest intellectual conviction to the most overwhelming emotion, which has not been made the starting-point of a successful religious course, and may not be so again.

The moral man especially, familiar from childhood with eternal things, shielded by early nurture from outward vice, favoured with a genial temperament, listening, it may be, to pulpit addresses, earnest but not impassioned, contin-

ually associating the idea of expected pardon with every thought of guilt—the moral man is of all men least likely to be surprised with sudden and violent convictions. Let him not be disheartened by their absence. Let him not excuse himself from diligent prayer and watchful effort against sin, as though these were useless or less acceptable to God than if he had more of emotion. God has shown him life and death: God will hear him if he will but pray. If he will not seek the grace which he knows he may secure, God may justly let him perish.

NOTE.—We must again remind the critical reader that we do not profess in these pages to present a systematic view of religious experience; we are speaking to men who are familiar with the general subject; we only present such points as may relieve the usual perplexities, and facilitate the personal experience, of the class of moral men for whom we write.

# IX.

## Religious Experience—Phases of Repentance.

"An evangelical repentance is a godly sorrow wrought in the heart of a sinful person by the word and Spirit of God, whereby, from a sense of his sin, as offensive to God, and defiling and endangering to his own soul, and from an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, he with grief and hatred of all his known sins, turns from them to God, as his Saviour and Lord."

RICHARD WATSON.

## IX.

## PECULIAR PHASES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE—REPENTANCE.

"I WILL ARISE, AND GO UNTO MY FATHER."—Bitterly enough had he felt the successive degradations, and realized the fate that closed around him; yet he sat motionless in his humiliation, and strove to banish thoughts that would not be dismissed. But that moment of resolution came—"I will arise and go!" His face turned homeward: he took the first trembling step away from the land of exile: his father saw him—afar off.

To every human soul which God has given to know its sin, God has given strength to forsake it. Whether amid the thunder and the whirlwind, the still small voice has come; or, like a strange presentiment of danger, the conviction has grown upon it, the heart may look toward the cross of Christ, and say, "I will arise and go." Not that by one effort of the will it can throw off its evil nature. But every one has power to

struggle against the *act* of sin, and, as he struggles, to pray. He may entirely fail at first. But his prayer will bring a larger power of resistance to evil, a deeper earnestness of prayer, and greater readiness for successive measures of spiritual aid; until he becomes conscious of a power not only to resist but to overcome the sinful impulse, and sensible also that in his evil nature itself a change from sinfulness to purity has begun, and thus there is less to overcome.

In the spirit thus aroused, and gathering its energies for the struggle, the first moral effort is naturally directed to those particular sins which education or an instinctive horror have made most conspicuous, or into which the peculiarity of our temperament and temptations may have most frequently betrayed us. The rest of our conduct seems comparatively blameless, and the work of reformation is summed up in the resolute conflict with a few evil habits. The main positive duties also, which are seen to be involved in Christian character, and which have hitherto been neglected, are thenceforth observed with scrupulous care. But the self-reformer, with the pride of success mingling with his serious energy of purpose, soon starts to find that he has sadly miscalculated the foes whom

he has challenged. He has laid prostrate the circle of transgressions which closed in most nearly and tauntingly around him; but their fall only leaves exposed to view other and larger ranks of sins, which had been undetected or but vaguely apprehended behind the more prominent evils. For the heart once resolutely deaf to the strongest claims of religious obligation, but now quickened, and practised to hear their solemn voice, thrills to the cries of a thousand duties trampled and crushed beneath the feet of victorious sins, and springs to the rescue. Again and again, yea, more and more as we struggle on, the light grows clearer, and conscience more sensitive, until not alone our more observable words and actions seem amenable to the law of rectitude, but all actions and all words, the imaginations of the mind, the most familiar exercises of the heart, the light and fleeting impulses of the soul are clothed with a moral character, and are clearly right or wrong. The delicacy which we once thought but a morbid scrupulosity, a weak attention to petty distinctions, now is felt to be a sense of solemn truth. The smallest diamond, the minutest crystal that shows one facet from out a stone, or forms but half a grain of sand, shines when the sun beams on it, while the

atom of uncrystalline earth beside it reflects no ray: and so, the approving smile, which, like a sunlight, beams out from God's holiness on all that is not sin, is reflected from the slightest actions and words, from half-formed feelings and unfinished thoughts.

There is a great point gained when the soul thus realizes the religious character of all we think, and feel, and say, and do. Conspicuous duties could be done, and flagrant vices could be laid aside by the resolute action of the will; and when once the form is not visible, the heart may imagine that it has annihilated its evils. But when the entire previous life, even to minutest action and feeling, assumes a moral character, the self-will and the enmity which appeared to be all summed up in a few gross sins that, like great tumours, festered on the soul, now are seen in a thousand points, and the heart sickens to see itself covered with sins—covered with a general eruption of transgressions. A great point has been gained; but a more solemn revelation is at hand. So long as only a few conspicuous violations of law were noticed, they seemed like isolated impulses, like mere local weaknesses or diseases, which, if not actually caused by the pressure of an outward tempta-

tion, were peculiarly sensitive to its presence, while the rest of the moral being was in health. But as these points of actual sin multiply and overspread the soul, a sense of their countlessness, and the difficulty of reducing them to purity and health, grows on us with deadly certainty. Then the great truth comes. It flashes on us, that these sins are not scattered and separate ailings, which can be removed by any separate treatment, however severe and long continued; but that the disease is in the blood, and the inmost nature of the soul is poisoned with the virus that breaks out in separate transgressions. Then self-despair begins. As long as separate sins could be numbered, the soul had courage to rally its healthful energies, and overcome them—but if the *nature* be infected, whence shall the restoring energy go forth? A terrible conviction bursts upon the soul, as when of old a Hebrew invalid hopefully and patiently applied the most painful remedies as his malady assumed its various forms, till suddenly that fatal sign met his eye, and he cried out in agony, "I AM A LEPER."

Yet, during this solemn instruction in the completeness of his depravity, the repenting sinner may have really corrected his life with so

much success that few or none suspect him to be thus pained in secret. He may even find that as he avoids occasions of sin, and as refusal to indulge or to excite evil desires serves, after the first struggles, to allay the craving for sin, his heart itself is not so agitated by conflicting passions. He may repress the *emotion* of passion until even he himself cannot realize that the repressed principle still remains; and then the better impulses of his constitution, which have heretofore been sacrificed to the indulgence of baser passions, may now assert their influence and adorn the character.

Self-Culture is the watchword of a philosophy directly opposed to the doctrine of depravity or of regeneration by the Holy Spirit; and certainly the power of self-culture to elevate and harmonize the character, by its own single force, apart from any divine aid given in answer to prayer, is a most interesting, as it is to many a most perplexing fact. A faculty adequate to such high achievements, demands a fair consideration and a just estimate of its claim.

"There are two powers of the human soul which make self-culture possible—the self-searching and the self-forming power. We have

first the faculty of turning the mind on itself; of recalling its past and watching its present operations; of learning its various capacities and susceptibilities; what it can do and bear—what it can enjoy and suffer; and of thus learning in general, what our nature is, and what it was made for. It is worthy of observation, that we are able to discern not only what we already are, but what we may become; to see in ourselves germs and promises of a growth to which no bounds can be set; to dart beyond what we have actually gained, to the idea of perfection, as the end of our being. It is by this self-comprehending power that we are distinguished from the brutes, which give no signs of looking into themselves. Without this there would be no self-culture, for we should not know the work to be done; and one reason why self-culture is so little proposed is, that so few penetrate their own nature.

"But self-culture is possible, not only because we can enter into and search ourselves. We have still a nobler power—that of acting on, determining, and forming ourselves. This is a fearful as well as glorious endowment; for it is the ground of human responsibility. We have the power not only of tracing our powers, but of

guiding and impelling them; not only of watching our passions, but of controlling them; not only of seeing our faculties grow, but of applying to them means and influences to aid their growth. We can stay or change the current of thought. We can concentrate the intellect on objects which we wish to comprehend. We can fix our eyes on perfection, and make almost everything speed us toward it. This is indeed a noble prerogative of our nature."*

Noble prerogative indeed! and one by which humanity, as it came from the hand of the Creator, held within itself the power of infinite progression toward divine perfection, "changing from glory unto glory." Endowed with the germ and early blossoming of every virtue and every grace of character, it needed culture only to develop the perfect fruit. And even now the germ that is not blighted can be cultured still, and throw its beauty and its fragrance over human life; and grafted impulses, inserted for the time in the barren nature, may be developed into momentary luxuriance; but the blighted germs of spiritual affections and principles defy all power of culture. Not until again created as at first, by

* Channing's Self-Culture.

the energy of the Holy Ghost, will the living germ of a spiritual life be there to admit of culture.

However specious, therefore, the achievements of a prayerless self-culture may appear—a culture of those elements which are found in humanity without a divine implantation of new principles—they will be found upon examination to be exhausted in mere external reformation, in the strengthening or repression of those temporary instincts which encase the soul, and in the delicacy given by exercise to those apprehensions of the obligation and beauty of perfect virtue, which are indestructible elements even in a depraved nature. That only can be cultivated which already has root in our nature. Let then those elements of moral and social character, upon which we have so long dwelt in former pages, have the highest culture; let the best combination of natural dispositions be encouraged by all prudential restraints and a fostering education; let the oppressive sense of the moral obligation of rectitude attend each action, and keep the future destiny in view; let a sense of the artistic beauty of virtue prompt to a mere sentimental desire for symmetry of character; let the Spirit, which is ever warning or alluring

the soul by its secret whispers, breathe suggestions of better things; and you may produce a character almost faultless to outward observation, and presenting a strange similitude to religious experience in men who never prayed nor felt their need of prayer, or pardon, or renewal—who never yet felt that personal affection toward the Holiest and Best, for which no general sentiment can be a compensation.

Self-culture, in another sense, is indeed the life-work of the Christian; but it is the culture of a new element of character, *implanted* in answer to prayer, and cherished in a strength and wisdom sought and found *out of himself*. This true religious culture may indeed demand the same prudential avoidance of temptation, the same repression of manifestations of evil, the same culture of natural virtues, beneath the shelter of which true spiritual virtue may more easily grow up. But all this is felt to be but subservient and temporary—the careful strengthening of the *false-work* over which the arch of spiritual purity reaches its completeness.

Thus far, then, we have been speaking of that which the soul may learn and do, by the action of its own conscience and its own will, quickened

by that Holy Spirit which, unasked and undesired—yea, resisted and despised—still will not leave us, but yet waits to be gracious more and more. There may have been no prayer; there may have been no distinct dependence upon divine aid. Seeing its sins, an honest heart undertakes to remove them; and its first success in relinquishing many forms of transgression leaves it no sense of weakness. As the multitude of the heart's imperfections comes out more clearly, the work appears more arduous, but not impracticable to energetic effort. Then, as self-discipline is turned to those expressions of desire or passion which are more spontaneous, less under the control of the will, and lying, if we may so express it, nearer to the heart itself, failure upon failure dispirits the first enthusiasm, and the spirit, sorely pressed, would fain have aid from heaven. Yet still the aid desired is only partial—a grant additional to previous endowments, and merely supplementary to native powers. But more and more seems needed as the conflict thickens, until as he, day by day, realizes more clearly that he is combating, not with the mere forms of evil but with the secret energy that is beneath them; and as at last he sees that this energy of sin is the pulsation of his very being,

the honest and humble spirit admits the fact that he can of himself do just nothing to the purpose, and God must work the whole salvation, if it be wrought at all.

And here we feel bound, in justice to the patient kindness of the Holy Spirit, to speak of another phase of repentance, which is not enough observed by the world or by the Church. We know that the natural expression of feeling is in language, and that a sense of personal dependence on another, and a desire for direct assistance, naturally leads to a direct expression and a formal application. Thus prayer is habitually spoken of in Scripture as a verbal and specific expression of recognised wants, demanding for its full and concentrated power the privilege of definite time, and place, and utterance. Even the veteran Christian feels increasingly the necessity of those seasons of concentrated and exclusive supplication, in order to sustain that clear sense of divine things, and those spontaneous aspirations, which pervade his momentary life. Perhaps few instances are known, in which, without that spoken prayer—in whispered tones it may be, or in broken utterance, but still the articulate utterance of an earnest heart—any one has reached the full ex

perience of a living Christianity. Few minds are so formed and trained that they *could* withhold the utterance of deep feeling, and fewer still would do it without self-discipline and a set purpose. Yet *it may be so*, that, in the earlier stages of religious experience at least, the spirit of prayer may breathe out from the heart, although unclothed in words, and unrecognised as prayer by the soul itself. Deepening convictions of sin may grow upon the conscience, and resolute effort be put forth, and under the sense of weakness gained by instruction or by experience, the heart may feel its dependence upon God, and *lean humbly and trustingly upon his aid* as it struggles onward. Ask such a one, abruptly, if he prays, and he may start, and answer, "No." Yet he does pray; not in that full expression, that minute specification, and that direct address which by a law of our constitution would deepen the uttered feelings as they are poured forth; but yet he prays in the spirit of humble trust for aid.

Now, in the light of this observation, we see the true solution of a problem most difficult to those who recognise no transition stage between mere natural self-culture and that definite prayerfulness which takes the open attitude of a peni-

tent. Often does the pastor's eye rest upon honoured and amiable men and women, whose attentive gaze and serious spirit indicate their religious sensibility. Not only is there correctness in their life, and a careful culture of that symmetry and justness of sentiment which a refined and cultured mind may be expected to exhibit; but there is a solemn recognition of truth, a spiritual apprehension, a tone of dependence and of trust, which, even while some evils may yet visibly be indulged, do betoken a spirit in some degree moulded and taught of God. And it is, in very truth, an incipient Christian experience. It is not prudential, nor instinctive, nor æsthetic morality: it is not the energy of a soul with only the original measure of grace which *started* him on his probation. It is the experience of one taught his danger and his sin, who, in his effort to reform, feels the need of pardon and of grace, and does lean on God for help day by day. Such perhaps was that young man whom Jesus loved, although for a moment, as a new view of self-denial probed his nature to the quick, he shrank and went away sorrowful. *Nature may not have the credit of such characters.* Religion has begun to transform them with her light. The Spirit has breathed upon

those hearts. They are not to be confused by mere denunciation, but to be welcomed as even now crossing the threshold of religion, and only to be led on to more decided and explicit action.

In the process of gathering resolution which finally consents to yield all known transgression, however cherished and habitual, the heart sometimes is perplexed to find its hardest struggle to be with sins to which it had scarcely realized a temptation before. Indulgences so trivial that one would have smiled at the idea of bondage to them, and which are even now despised, are yet the hardest and last to be sacrificed. It seems as though the evil spirit had not only relinquished all the fortress beside, to entrench himself more strongly in one tower; but as if in mockery he made that point impregnable which we had thought of the least strength. Long may the heart pause before that little sin, so slight amid the larger sacrifices already made to duty, as to be scarcely seen. The unwilling spirit asks if He to whom all else is surrendered, will let a little thing like that destroy his favour. And we answer, No! God cares not for that petty sin; but around that trivial act the self-will of the heart is gathered. To disobey and to wound a friend, to break the law of right,

when temptation is overwhelming, might admit of palliation. But God counts those transgressions great, the inducements to which are so contemptible.

The sense of sin involves the consciousness of guilt and the desert of punishment. We said above that sometimes the fearful apprehension of wrath to come agitated the penitent, even through long seasons of contrition. But sometimes the Holy Spirit, *even in advance*, gives to the heart that is pressing on toward its full redemption, such a view of the atonement as breaks the terror while it leaves the shame. Hard is it for a high spirit to come humbly down and take mercy—as sheer mercy—which might have been withheld, and left him wretched in defilement and fearful punishment. The heart must feel that it must be *forgiven* before it can be *renewed;* must come in *disgrace* and *humiliation*, and ask to be restored.

And, finally, as the hour of deliverance draws near, the Holy Spirit breathes more and more into the heart a hatred to sin, as well as a fear of its penalties; and from its intrinsic vileness the spirit turns with loathing. It yields no longer to the seductive evil as to an enticement that it loves, though fearing the retribution which

must follow; it turns away no longer from a cherished though forbidden vice: it loathes its conquerors; it despises its master sins; it delights in the law of God after the inward man, and feels that it is carnal—sold under sin. Sickened, and oppressed by unwilling association of every thought and feeling with transgression, the weary soul cries out, "O! wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

In thus presenting the successive phases of experience through which an earnest penitent may pass in his progress to peace and purity, we do not mean to assert that the process must be long, and the lessons learned so gradually, as we have described them. In the rich, warm moisture of a river's bank beneath a tropical sky, a single day will suffice to raise with magic suddenness the huge luxuriance of a majestic plant from the tiniest seed. In colder zones that growth would be the slow and gradual work of months. Yet the process of growth is identical. The same chemical changes, and the same mechanical formation of cell and fibre, and blossom and full fruit, go on in each; only in one the stages are distinctly marked, while in the other they cannot be discriminated. Thus, under vary-

ing influences of the Holy Spirit, acting through varying circumstances around the soul, and with the varying coöperation of the soul itself, the transition and processes of Christian experience may be hastened or retarded, so that sometimes any eye may mark the successive stages, and sometimes they may be unperceived by the penitent himself. The slower movement affords an easier exhibition and analysis of the great processes of moral growth: and, generally, the moral man will pass through that more gradual transition. But wheresoever the reader may feel that he can recognise his heart's position along the earlier stages which we have exemplified, let him hasten, by immediate prayer and resolution, to reach a perfect experience.

# X.

## Religious Experience—Faith.

"To him that in thy Name believes,
Eternal life with thee is given;
Into himself he all receives,—
Pardon, and holiness, and heaven.

"The things unknown to feeble sense,
Unseen by reason's glimm'ring ray,
With strong commanding evidence,
Their heavenly origin display.

"Faith lends its realizing light;
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly;
The' Invisible appears in sight,
And God is seen by mortal eye."

CHARLES WESLEY.

## X.

## PECULIAR PHASES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE—FAITH.

Conviction bears her torch into the secret chambers of the soul, and it writhes beneath a sense of sin.

Repentance speaks, and that soul rouses to a resistance to the evil, until in self-despair it can only pray.

Faith utters, "I believe," and lo! a "new creation:" the sinner stands forgiven—purified—a child of God!

What is this faith?

Freely God will bestow pardon and renewal on any penitent seeker; but of course the gift must be received with a full understanding and acknowledgment of the circumstances under which it is given. Man must take his proper attitude before God and the universe, and he must own the true character of the act which saves him. Thoroughly *depraved*, the blessing which he seeks must not be mere strengthening

and aid, but a new nature—a regeneration—a life from the dead. *Guilty* in his pollution, he must seek favour not as mere benevolence, but as mercy, from a God whom he has personally wronged and insulted. *Exposed to punishment*, he must feel that his soul has no compensation which it can bring to atone for its past and present sin. So long as a soul shall refuse honestly to look its sins in the face, and feel their vileness, and meanness, and insult; so long as it would fain take God's help rather as the faithful soldier's regular rations, than as the reprieve given to a deserter; so long it will seek in vain. But the heart humbled and without a plea, may trust in God's promise for present pardon and for present power. Thus, by resting solely on God's mercy, the soul distinctly abjures any merit or power in itself, and so negatively recognises the true circumstances under which salvation is to be given.

But, furthermore, it is clear that the gift may be free, and yet God may have chosen a special method of bestowing it. There may be something in that method repulsive, or humiliating, or perplexing to the mind, and yet God has a right to demand that we take his gift, not only as his gift, but as coming through these particu-

lar circumstances and instrumentalities. If it has pleased God to grant us salvation by the death of Christ as an atonement, we cannot leave out of sight this great fact, and say we will take the mercy direct from God, without reference to the views or the expedients which have weight upon his mind. We must take it as it really is—as God's mercy shown to us in view of that sacrificial death. We must trust in God's mercy, *through* Christ.

It is not demanded that a penitent be able to solve all the deep problems which hang around the atonement. He may trust God's word that the sufferings of Jesus are held as the substitute or equivalent for the penalties he merited, and yet he may not fathom the mystery, how God finds in them a reason and a means, without which he could not pardon. The unlettered orphan-boy, ignorant and of slow comprehension, may take the check handed him by a benefactor, and hearing that in view of, and for the sake of that check, his plea will be heard by a banker, may never think or never know just how this banker is persuaded to give the money, or how he is compensated; but that poor boy may ask and receive the amount, not in view of his own claim, and not in view of any personal good-will alone

of the banker toward his benefactor, but in view of that same check. So may a poor penitent soul feel, that it is enough if God and Christ know, as perhaps they alone know fully, the compensations and the bearings of that atonement. It is enough that we never come to ask God's blessings but through that medium, trusting, see we more or less clearly, in the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. We dare present no prayer to God which Christ has not endorsed—and endorsed in his own blood of suffering.

Thus, as by the abjuration of any merit or goodness in ourselves, faith admits, negatively, the circumstances under which pardon and renewal are to be granted: so, by resting on the atonement, faith recognises, positively, the true medium of salvation. It need only to be added that this trust is for a *present* fulfilment, in answer to our present prayer. "Faith is a sure confidence, which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ *his* sins are forgiven, and *he* reconciled to the favour of God."

But when an humble penitent, taking his true position before God, and yielding all other hope, does trust in God's promise through that atonement, *thereupon* his sins are pardoned, and he is

held as guiltless; his enslaved will has power given unto it, not only to resist, but to overcome his besetments; he feels that instead of that strange opposition to God which lurked within, a hearty and cordial love for holiness and God has entered; and with the pure love toward God there come all pure affections toward man.

Now, this reliance, this resting on God's promise for Jesus's sake, is what is commonly called the *act* of faith; an *act*, we say, because it involves a special *effort* of the will. We all know how, when years have trained us into habitual impression of another's unkind feelings toward us, even when some circumstances which misled us are explained away, yet the habitual feeling so occupies the mind, that only a sense of justice leads us to say, "I know how false my prejudice has been; I know all is explained; I *ought* to confide in him, and I *will*." So the long unbelief of a heart unfits the soul to believe that God can, and will, and does forgive it; and with all the grace bestowed it requires an *effort* of the soul to rely, and say, I *will* trust his mercy through Christ. Thus the *act* of faith is simply "*putting* our trust" in the atonement.

But there is also to be noticed a power of apprehending spiritual things, a power to realize

what has only been dimly conceived before, which, because it does take cognizance of things beyond the range of the natural sight, is termed faith. This supernatural recognition of God's presence and favour, and of our relations to him, and indeed of all eternal things previously revealed to the ear, but now brought home to the heart, brings up before the Christian a new world. More and more, as a part of his restored prerogatives, this faith of apprehension grows stronger and stronger from the moment of that first *act* of faith. And so clear and easy is this spiritual vision of spiritual facts and truths, that the soul's reliance upon God, which at first required an effort, now becomes an easy and spontaneous state of assurance.

From the first prayer of the penitent, a low degree of this faith of apprehension is given; and as he perseveres in self-distrust and self-denial, it grows clearer still: he *realizes* the existence of the solemn interests at stake; he sees, albeit dimly, the fitness of the plan of redemption; and he has a foundation for that first *act* of faith, that resolution of putting his trust in Jesus. As he presses on in the Christian life, there may be long seasons of that clear apprehension which makes trust an easy, almost a

spontaneous reliance. But not only when sin may have destroyed the Christian's communion with the Father, and thrown him back to his first position, but sometimes under temptations, under peculiar circumstances, and in regard to particular points, that open vision and easy trust are withdrawn, and the soul has its reliance upon divine truth *tested*, and retains its title to the promises, only by a sustained *act* of faith, a dauntless resolution to believe and rest calmly, come what may.

The distinction between the "faith of reliance" and the "faith of spiritual apprehension," is essential to any clear views of Scriptural expressions. The *trust* is *faith*, because it rests upon a promise, and upon an atonement unseen, and revealed only by God. The *spiritual vision* is *faith*, because it apprehends things which the natural eye hath not seen, nor the natural ear heard. But the difference is marked. God does indeed, by his own power, first unasked, and then prayed for, bring the heart to that point where it *may* believe, and so strengthen it that it *can* believe; but in that strength the heart must of its own free-will *act*, and put its trust in the promise of God. Power to believe, is not inability to disbelieve. God does not work that

faith of trust, irresistibly; he gives power to trust, and then calls upon the heart to do it.

But the degree of spiritual vision of "things eternal and unseen," depends solely upon the pleasure of the Mediator, who is guiding each child of God to perfection. The heart may indeed trust more easily when heaven seems opened, and its glories are revealed; but its true foundation of trust is the word of God, which abideth the same although the glorious vision passes away. The Christian is like one led to the top of the citadel of an impregnable fortress at midnight: he is required to enter and abide quietly amid all alarms, upon the simple assurance of his guide that he is safe. The glimmering moonbeams, breaking through a cloud, may sometimes disclose the strength and outline of the fortress even to his view; yet his faith rests upon his guide: for when the clouds may again veil all from sight, his faith must be as firm. So the Christian relies on God's promises of pardon, and adoption, and renewal, however his light and joyous apprehension of divine things may come and go—only looking to see that he does sincerely yield his will to God. We are saved by faith—that is, by *trusting*.

If, then, God pleases, at the moment of an ap-

propriating faith, to let the great change be wrought, it is not for us to hesitate because we cannot see any merit or any power in the mere act of believing or trusting God. There is neither merit nor power in faith; the Holy Spirit chooses that moment to act—this is enough.

Yet little as we can see in faith to bring the great change, we can see much in a want of faith—in unbelief—to arrest, or keep back a bestowment which otherwise would be given. In heaven no one thinks it any special virtue to believe and trust in God; it is a mere matter of course. It is evident that a created and finite mind must ever meet, in the dispensations of an infinite God, whose arrangements are on a scale beyond his scope of vision, much to perplex, and much perhaps which seems not only unwise but even unjust. The only basis of hearty obedience and coöperation for one thus perplexed, must be in a firm faith in the holiness and wisdom which assigns his duties, and promises his needed strength, and overrules all things. Perfect confidence in Jehovah, without any encouragement but his character and word, is the preliminary and fundamental principle of love and obedience, wherever created beings dwell—be it in heaven or on earth. In all the arrangements of the un-

fallen universe, it is taken for granted that there is this implicit confidence in the wisdom, holiness, love, and truth of the Father of spirits. It is presupposed in every promise which God makes to angel or to seraph, that they rely upon his truth. It is understood, we say, and need not be expressed. But should they look up, in a moment of need, for the new blessing promised to their prayer, and say, or think it, "I doubt the truth of God," that doubt would cancel every promise, and hurl them aside as insulters of the Most High. Could they ever again come back, the very first condition must be a rejection of that insulting doubt—a readiness to trust themselves and every interest upon the simple word of God. It is not that any merit or magical power would be in their believing, but that the hinderance of their unbelief is gone.

So, when a ruined race is to be restored, and placed upon the same footing as the whole family of God, they are admitted to sonship upon resuming that simple state of "trust," which all must keep; and as God has promised pardon and renewal, through the atonement, to them that forsake sin, and any other hope of acceptance, the first testing of a willing and resolute faith in God, is that promise of a present salvation which calls

for a trust, "that I, even I, am a child of God." Until the heart is prepared to trust God for this, it cannot trust him for that which will require faith afterward. This is only the first lesson and exercise of a faith which is to have a ceaseless exercise through eternity—to say, "I rest upon thy promise, and I am reconciled."

So deep is the conviction of guilt and depravity in most who with "hearty repentance turn unto God," that, with all the strength imparted by the Holy Spirit, it requires a most intense effort to put our immediate trust in the atonement for a present salvation. The answering regeneration may come with as sudden and overpowering joy, and love, and vision of eternal things; but not always. The trust may seem gradually to settle, and acquire full strength; and gradually as the breaking day, the light of reconciliation—the peace, the love of God—may dawn upon the confiding spirit.

Here let us warn the intellectual reader to beware of an error by which a self-styled spiritualism has striven to *parody* the facts of Christian experience with a mere sentimental reverie. The idea is, that the various changes of principle, of affection, and of emotion, which follow a true

act of faith, are not to be regarded as in any wise supernatural—the result of any direct energy of the Holy Spirit upon the heart—but that the regular laws of mental suggestion and succession, by which one thought or feeling produces another, will account for all the phenomena of Christian experience. The act of faith, therefore, is not merely the *occasion* upon which God works the great change, but is in itself the *cause* of the succeeding change in the heart. Conversion is like any other operation of the mind.

The foundation of the error lies in the fact, that the truths of the gospel *ought* to awaken within the heart all these feelings of love to God and devotion to holiness, and ought to stimulate to moral energy. In a heart *properly sensitive*, these feelings must arise when the truths are properly presented. When, therefore, standing amid these motives and truths, the heart is filled with appropriate emotion, the conjecture is that the effect is produced by a natural power, without a divine interposition.

But the fallacy is in supposing that the heart is properly sensitive; for the very change to be produced is the restoration of the heart to a proper sensibility to spiritual motives and influences. The mystery of the heart has been, that

through long years it could have the great truths of redemption pressed upon it, and yet remain unaffected. It simply realizes that it ought to feel, and yet does not. And even when penetrated with a sense of guilt, and earnest in prayer for renewal, the bitter consciousness is, that it rebels against a God whom it ought to love, and is overcome by a temptation which it ought to crush like a moth. When, after long waiting—in full view of all these truths and motives—the heart sees no more clearly, and is no less dead to them than before, the same defect which renders all these truths powerless, would vitiate any *natural* influence of a mere reliance on the atonement. But when the penitent trusts, *then* God gives the *new nature*, and its new sensibility, and thus creates the love, and joy, and peace. *After that*, the various motives, acting on a soul now duly sensitive to their influence, will indeed deepen and animate the feelings which before they could not arouse.

Had God chosen, as the occasion of his new creation, a condition of salvation in no way connected with the result, every one would have given to his interposing grace the honour of the work. But we must feel that although there may be in certain truths an adaptation to impress the

heart, yet that adaptation does not obviate the need of a direct interposition of the Holy Spirit. Iron may be heated to a certain degree in common air, and with that given degree of heat may remain unconsumed, only *tending* to combustion; but if oxygen be poured around it, with the same heat applied, it burns with brilliant coruscations. So there may be a natural tendency in all the motives and views presented by the gospel, to awaken love and inspire a pure devotion, if only the heart were duly susceptible of their power; yet this tendency remains but a tendency, so long as the sorrow-stricken heart delays that act of faith; *then*, upon the new heart, the tendency becomes an actual power. This, then, is the act of regeneration on the part of God, following that act of reliance on the part of man, which is the condition of salvation.

The separate particulars of that change wrought in the soul, we have already alluded to. The slavery of the will which had continued even amid penitence and prayer is in a moment, it may be, broken forever. It has a power given it to overcome its besetments, as it was of old overcome by them. Not as a light labour may it be that all duties are done and all sin forsaken, but it is a mighty revolution which effects their

performance at all. The young Christian is half astonished at his own success. Yet if, by the strange power of choice inherent in his will, he shall turn back to any sin, that overcoming power will fail, and only by a fresh and penitent reliance on the atonement can it be regained.

And so there is inwrought a new love to God—a love which gives itself away, and asks only to be loved—a love spontaneous in a nature now akin to the divine. The old principle of self-will and pride, which swept away all nobler thoughts, is supplanted by a pure and self-sacrificing affection which subdues all opposition. And yet self-will is not at once eradicated. Subdued and crushed beneath a conquering love, it yet may struggle as it dies; but it writhes in a perpetual defeat. For although conscious of some influence from unworthy motives, yet we feel that the nobler love prevails against them. We take that inferior principle daily before God in prayer; and as we recount his promises, and rest on his atonement as the meritorious ground of their bestowment, we receive the grace which yet more gives supremacy to love.

And as the fountain is purified, the streams grow pure. Every pure affection and holy sentiment springs up in the heart. They, too, pre-

vail, each over its own antagonistic vice, although these impure feelings still linger as long as the selfishness in which they all have root. No evil thought or feeling is *tolerated* now. All virtue is loved, all duties are sacred. Each low and selfish sentiment that rises to view is loathed and spurned as a foul intruder soon to be destroyed.

Here is it that the Christian, rejoicing in conscious pardon and adoption, and assured of the glorious renovation already supreme within him, may yet experience the benefit of that same system of morality, with its prudential and instinctive motives, which were once everything to him. The common round of life affords a test and a temptation to every separate evil impulse of which the heart is capable. If a poor, imperfect heart were thus assailed on every side, how perpetual would be the harassment of watching against so many and incessant assaults. Hardly could it be endured with our young and feeble energy. But when, by these natural dispositions to correct action, we are saved from the force of temptation on many points, the attention is left undistracted to guard those points where the natural evil of our hearts is not thus repressed. The Christian, whose temper has always been

repressed and concealed beneath a constitutional amiability, may be able to bear a severer conflict with a less repressed impulse to covetousness, than if passion and avarice at once assailed him. The evils of the soul are like wrestlers who would hurl it to the dust: should all assail it, all at once, it might be bewildered and overcome; but if one or two only are permitted to task its energies, it may struggle hopefully, and yet learn how weak it is, and how strong those evils are. The heart may not realize its weakness in regard to those passions or vices, the disposition to which is repressed by God beneath an instinctive virtue; but from the strength of these few evils in which the depravity of its nature is clearly embodied, it can learn how *intense* that depravity is.

And more than this: The Christian may be made to see his sinfulness, *even beneath those natural virtues* which have prompted and do prompt his noblest conduct. Lurking even within them he detects the opposite vices, whose existence he had never suspected before. There is nothing strange in the still lingering influence of passions which once had undisputed sway; but that Christians, as they grow in conscious power, should find vices of feeling, and a sensi-

bility to low motives, which they *never felt before*, is strange indeed. Moralists who do reverence religious experience, must be sadly perplexed in reading the biographies of men for whom nature had done wonders, and in whom grace wrought gloriously, to hear them accusing themselves of passions and motives which, even when unconverted, they never betrayed, and which were clearly substituted by noble sentiments. Were these holy men morbid and unjust to their own natures? No! but the evils which were repressed and concealed, for the general benefit, so long as no divine power was invoked to give a nobler principle, and which even in earlier stages of experience were hidden beneath the natural virtues, are revealed now that the will can overcome them, and our trust in the love of God can bear up our astonished hearts. Strange that men of mildest temper should find irritableness and anger springing up, even as some spiritual blessing proves their communion with God. Strange that what we have thought a generous nature should feel a selfish purpose rising through his generosity, like a deeper stratum of the soul jutting up through the peaceful surface. The natural power of the instinctive sentiment may still continue, and secure the

outward action, and even the accustomed tone; and yet a hard struggle may go on against the rising of the baser remnant of an evil nature. Thus, when the Searcher and the Refiner of hearts has led us to realize the *depth* and *bitterness* of our depravity, by those few desires and temptations which were never held back by an instinctive virtue, he seems to lead the soul through each separate department of its nature, and show it the *entireness* of its depravity. The pure feelings which came in where none had ever been before, were evidently created by the Spirit's working in answer to the prayer of faith. From the first, the heart has felt that they are not its own, but momently received from the Mediator's hand as a fresh bestowment. The other impulses, which we called our better nature, seemed like our own, apart from restoring grace. But the Christian is taught, as he can bear it, that God will let him claim no virtue as his by nature, and feel no exultation. He shall hold every power and capability of good, immediately and momently, as the gift of the inworking and sustaining Spirit. When the moral scaffolding of religion falls away, the momently-received life in the soul will stand the same. Through all eternity we hold our life by faith.

Thus, we are saved by faith. Not so much by the faith of apprehension, which opens to us more and more of the spiritual world; but by that simple resting upon Christ to do for us, and in us, what we cannot do ourselves. Consciously as a child, held and guided in the firm grasp of a father's hand, the soul feels itself upheld by a supernatural strength. Consciously, as when an electric current thrills new energy through the frame, the soul feels the presence of an energy not its own. It comprehends the experience of the great apostle: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I live, I live by *faith* in the Son of God."

# XI.

## Love to God the Criterion of Virtue.

"Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Love—
Thou giver of new morals to mankind—
The grand morality is love of Thee."

YOUNG.

## XI.

### LOVE TO GOD, THE CRITERION OF VIRTUE.

We solicit the attention of the ingenuous student of his own heart, to a brief consideration of one point more, before he finally concludes the interpretation of its moral destiny.

Religion is, in its broadest principle, the love of holiness; and we have all along conceded that the love of God is but one manifestation of it. We avoided the embarrassment of considering religion merely as a personal reverence exacted by the Deity in virtue of his supremacy, without regard to the assiduity with which we discharge all other and more palpable duties. We have appealed directly to that intuitive sense of rectitude which none dispute; and we have only demanded that disinterested devotion to the right which all feel to be the very essence of piety. In addressing those who are tempted to bring forward their undeniable rectitude of conduct, and their many social virtues, as evidence of true piety, and as an offset against any want of evidence of love to

God, we have met them upon their own ground, and, admitting their virtues, have proven that, however beautiful they appeared, they were unreliable, and *might be* altogether spurious.

Yet certainly, however unreliable such a rare combination of instinctive dispositions *may be*, we have ourselves admitted that a truly harmonious character will be produced by a true principle; and therefore such an exhibition *may be genuine*. If, therefore, any one shall claim that beneath a rare and well-balanced assemblage of spontaneous virtues, he has also a conscious deference for the principle of moral obligation, and a sentiment of pleasure in the advancement of all good, it will present to the analyst of human nature a problem of the deepest interest; especially when, as may be the case, there is nevertheless a positive aversion to what he may please to term the *cant* of religion, its definite exercises of worship, and its vivid inward experiences.

A sufficient solution of the question is found by an application of the same principle which appears, so far as all the virtues elicited by human relations are concerned, so perfectly to demonstrate the genuineness of his virtues: it is to be demanded that the same "love of excellence" which appears to manifest itself in

every form of relative goodness, shall be as evident in that highest form which is due to Him whose relations to us call for the highest manifestations of love of which the heart is capable. If love to God be *but* one form of the love of rectitude, it is one form—a form which never can be absent from the principle itself.

Is there any extravagance in demanding for God, a regard as definite, as vivid in its personal consciousness, as marked in all its natural indications, as any human claims can elicit? There is no intrinsic loveliness in any human character, but its beauty lies in a faint resemblance to the divine mind; there is no peculiar and touching sentiment implied in earthly relationship, which God has not employed to convey an inadequate illustration of his care and sympathy; and every thrill of gratitude that direct kindness can awaken, will find, as it breathes the praise of its benefactor, that the earthly friend and his kindness are both but a providence of the one great Friend. So that every intrinsic claim upon our esteem and love, and every motive to a personal gratitude which gleams out from human hearts, are but scattered rays from his perfect character, dimmed and broken by the imperfect media through which they shine. Ought not He in

whom all other claims are combined and blended into one glorious character, to receive from us an intensity of devotion equal at the least to the united force of all subordinate regards?

But without annoying the cultivated reader with any analogies between divine and human claims, let us dwell upon that one principle of love to purity and excellence, which his own consciousness attests him to possess. He has a right to a deferential hearing when he avers that he has not only a sense of the obligation of duty, and not only a perception of the beauty of virtue, but also a true and hearty love for virtue itself.

Now no reflecting mind will hesitate to admit that an absorbing love for any attribute of character will always be attracted to the character which embodies and realizes it most fully. It is not enough that the love of any principle impels to appropriate action, and to endeavours to spread the sway of that principle over other minds: it also fills the heart with a spontaneous affection toward a kindred spirit who manifests the same sentiment. We love not only the principles of perfectly congenial hearts—we love those hearts themselves. The devotion to those principles may have been the slow growth of years; unper-

ceived, it may be, by the soul itself; but the full heart claims immediate fellowship with one whose word or deed reveals the same master-sentiment. If God is purity itself, a combination of faultless moral attributes, how can it be that a heart imbued with a love for all these qualities, in the abstract, shall see his perfection as it is revealed unto us, and fail to love, not his attributes alone, but himself, and that supremely? Is it not even true, that a kindred spirit and genius will be recognised by a congenial mind, even under circumstances which conceal its full character from all others? A word, a look, a tone, are enough to suggest the hidden character, and the enthusiastic heart turns earnestly to search for the deep veins of gold which thus glisten through the surface rubbish. So, if revelation were but dim, and there were no direct teaching of the Spirit vouchsafed, a holy heart, a heart filled with a supreme love of moral excellence, would recognise with delight its great original and love him with supreme affection. But with so clear a revelation of the divine character, and with such an express recognition of him as the perfection of all moral attributes on the part of the moralist, it is sheer absurdity to profess any deep love of holiness, which is not drawn to

him personally, and does not find in him its ideal, its all in all.

1. The tests of personal affection are familiar to us all. Love, in its most general definition, is the desire of another's happiness; and this happiness is but the satisfaction of those various wants and desires of which the heart is conscious. Affection may anticipate many of the wishes of another; yet, as each heart has its peculiar and varying wants, we take the *expressed* wishes of a friend as the guide to his happiness; and compliance, or obedience, is the sure result. We may indeed refuse a request, if our more experienced judgment declares that the wish is based upon mistaken grounds, and would not prove what is anticipated. And so we may be embarrassed by conflicting wishes, and requests at variance with moral principle. But in a case where no error of judgment can call for our correction, and where no conflicting interest can enter, and where no variance from moral rectitude is involved, the pure heart that loves another, cannot but spring to comply with the expression of its will. We appeal to the common experience in all the relations of love which we sustain, if such is not the principle and its opera-

tion, and if such would not be its development toward that perfect character who claims to be loved with all the heart. For although humanity can make good no claim to such prompt and unconflicting obedience to every wish, yet may Jehovah claim even this. The slightest expression of his will must be paramount in influence, —the minutest command, a spur to action.

Love, in its earthly manifestations, not only complies with the wishes of its objects when refusal would bring them loss or pain; but even where it knows that events may occur to make them forget or overlook the disobedience, or may compensate the effect of our negligence, there is still a mysterious impulse to respect their desires. Even when death has borne them from us, or distance formed a barrier which prevents their knowledge of our action, yet love is drawn to respect their known principles; and we do as they would wish to have us do, could they but know our action. And thus, although the sum of God's felicity may not be impaired by our conduct, yet a heart that loves him finds in that thought no relief from the sweet obligation of obedience. Aside from all personal claim on our affections, God might claim obedience from the pure in heart in virtue of that perfect wisdom

which alone can lay down the unerring path of holiness through eternity. But it is not only as the chief engineer of the way of holiness that God's words are to bind the holy soul; that way is not only approved by his official wisdom, but loved by his heart. The appeal is not official, but personal: "If ye love *me*, keep my commandments."

Obedience, therefore,—obedience *for God's sake*, as well as for the sake of the right,—is an essential evidence of love to God, and therefore of a genuine regard to purity and rectitude.

2. Inseparable from true affection, is the instinctive desire of approval, and of a responsive love, from the object of affection. If for the time it cannot secure such a recognition, true affection will still persist in advancing the happiness and anticipating the wants of another, in patient labour; but yet it longs for this return, and feels its absence, and finds its highest joy at last in the consciousness that the regard is mutual. However we may admit the excellence of another's character, yet if we love him not, we may be indifferent to his regard. But if pure affection for him once enters, it cannot be: Love never rests unloved.

The soul, therefore, that never woke to a love

of its Creator, may rest in the quietude of indifference, beneath a doubt of his favour, and the absence of the tokens of his love. All that it has to do is to manage the question of expediency, as to its probable future welfare. If it can be calm apart from the question of God's personal opinion and feelings, it can be very calm. But the soul that loves God cannot bear suspense as to his estimate of its affection. It may feel unworthy of his love, but it is pained to feel unworthy, and yearns for, and hopes for purification and his blessing. Not only the heart that has once felt the clear sense of divine favour, but the soul that as yet has not enjoyed it, if it begins to love him, "panteth after God's" love. The diaries of the purest among the pious show how their souls yearned for this assurance of his favour, for its own sake. It was not enough for them to do right; it was not enough to have the consciousness of doing right; they demanded something beyond the approval of their own hearts: the sense of a *personal* recognition was their one great aspiration.

3. Love not only longs to do the will and to secure the distant approval of its object, but it must have communion and mutual expression of

thought and feeling. We love the *society* of those whom we love. Even where a friend may, in moral or social capacities, be inferior to ourselves, and repulsive to our sentiments, yet still the social power of love is shown by its toleration of defects which would exclude all others, by its vain hopes of reform and magic changes, as it clings to the society and watches the interests of its idol. Where no such obstacle intervenes, love will have a full communion. In proportion as it feels itself understood, it will share its sorrows and its joys, and breathe its hopes and fears. The mere presence of the loved is grateful. Mutual expression of interest is dearer still. To be aided by the hand we love is sweet, and to acknowledge its kindness is a luxury. And if there be *not* such a thing as communion, personal and direct, with God, those who love him will feel the *deficiency;* and if they believe it possible, they will seek until they can talk with God, as friend with friend. If the Bible marks out a state of soul in which the communion is so constant and so sensible that it fulfils the promise of the Saviour, "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," how can one that loves him feel *satisfied* without it?

If, then, a true devotion to abstract excellence *must* produce a love to the all-perfect One; if the invariable expressions of such a love are a personal obedience, and a yearning for personal tokens of approval, and a desire for the fullest intercourse of soul with soul; if hearty thanksgiving for kindness shown, and spontaneous expression of our cares and our griefs, and delight in the sense of dependence on one beloved, and direct requests for an aid never refused, be the natural embodiments of such a love; upon what principle of reasoning is it that a mere vague reverence to *attributes* of character—a reverence which no *human* heart could receive as a substitute for the personal regard it demands—is to be palmed upon Jehovah as a satisfactory equivalent for the personal devotion which is denied him?

We admit that analogies sometimes fail, and are not to be insisted upon too rigidly. If among those who as a class have evinced the highest spirit of piety and practical goodness, there is found no sentiment of affection toward the Father of spirits, and no expressions of personal regard beyond an abstract reverence, *then* we must admit that there is nothing more to be demanded of any one.

But if, in every age and in every grade of intellect and culture, there has been a distinct avowal of an actual experience corresponding with what analogy would lead us to expect; if men who have not culture or sensibility enough to know much about abstract rectitude, do avow a burning love to God himself; if men, whose sensitive and cultured minds had long felt all the general sentiment which is so much relied on, declare that they have had a distinct experience *superadded* to this, and give every expression of a personal devotion which the analogies of common life could suggest; if the Bible-experience breathes the glowing spirit, and the written testimony of unimpeachable saints in former days confirm its existence, and on every side, amid all the formality and hypocrisy, earnest hearts of every natural variety and educational bias, declare that they have found "the love of God shed abroad in the heart,"—how can the candid man of mere integrity and virtuous impulses banish the conviction, that his own soul has *not* the love of God, and therefore not the genuine love of rectitude itself?*

* If the man of religious sentiment will look through a volume of hymns, such as are used in our churches, he may be surprised by observing that he can enter into most of the

But another aspect of this subject deserves attention. As yet we have only insisted upon love to God, with all its peculiar expressions, as a virtue equally indispensable with the relative virtues, in establishing the genuineness of a religious experience. We desire now to show that, while relative duties are presupposed, yet the most important and reliable test of a true love of rectitude is in the consciousness and the peculiar fruits of love to God.

The reason is clear from our previous pages. In order to the practicability of a probation, it is found needful that social order should be preserved, even where no moral purity exists; and therefore God has imparted instinctive virtues, parallel to the true qualities which result from

expressions of reverence for general principles, and most of the references to practical duties: but that large class of hymns which speak of the "presence, the smile, the fellowship, and personal manifestations of God," appear to be very poor poetry, and very extravagant language. Yet the writers of these hymns, men and women of the highest taste and judgment, felt them to be both just and dignified: so do many who sing them now. It might suggest to the critic of evangelical expressions, the possibility that the only reason why so much appears to him the empty verbiage of *cant*, is because he has not religious experience enough to understand it.

moral excellence. Many of the actions and many of the emotions which would be produced by genuine relative virtues, are necessarily brought to pass by this scheme of preparatory motives. It is this which renders an appeal to human virtue so fallacious. But to the continuance of society and probation, the conduct which peculiarly marks the love of God is not requisite. God may not be in all their thoughts, and yet men may go through the usual labours and good offices of life. Idolatry, superstition, practical atheism—all hold sway over successive generations in various countries; and yet they live, and love, and labour, and are capable of receiving or rejecting a higher life. Men have no secondary motive for a personal devotion to Deity—for *delight* in prayer, and praise, and communion, which can usurp the place of love. Even amid Christian influences, therefore, the many who are moulded and prompted by high natural virtue to virtuous relative action, are seldom found delighting in those personal exercises of devotion which are left at their option. The closet is, therefore, absolutely requisite to confirm the approbation of the market-place. The duties of social morality may be produced either by a true or a spurious virtue; the duties of a glad

and constant devotion to God are the fruit of true virtue only. However, therefore, the social virtues and general sentiments are always presupposed,' and no profession of religion can be respected where these are wanting, yet no one may rely on the genuineness of any experience which is not sealed by an evident *love to God.*

We must not be understood to depreciate the example of Him who went about doing good, and healing all of whatsoever plagues they had. We know that the Church is often charged with wasting in abstract devotion the energy which might by timely action regenerate the world. It is not true. The Church has ever striven to meliorate the temporal evils which she has seen to be within her reach; and her individual membership have, as their piety brightened, done what they could in a private sphere. It is only within a few brief years that men not in official stations have dared to look at great social evils, and feel that voluntary association might relieve them. The Church has gained, not a new spirit, but the consciousness of a new power. The membership of the Church is ready and waiting to work, when they see clearly what

to do—and they will do it in the love of both God and man.

Yet all these temporal evils are palpable to any observer; and they appeal to the common and instinctive feelings of mankind. They appeal to those feelings at each successive stage, as a nearer approach to religion subdues the heart and quickens the sensibility to the obligation and beauty of virtuous impulses and heroic action. Perhaps the irreligious philanthropists may see more clearly the outward and material machinery to be used in regenerating society, because their attention is not distracted to the want of that spiritual life in the world's heart, without which it cannot receive and perpetuate the new forms which it is proposed to give it. Earnest and enthusiastic spirits, men of noble energy and daring, need a field of exercise and display. A secular philanthropy is the chivalry of the nineteenth century. Just in proportion as a religious element enters, it grows more elevated, more dependent on God, and more direct in its worship of the Father. And when it becomes truly religious, the love of God is the supreme motive, absorbing or heightening every other.

Men speak as though the love of God *could*

be exclusive of love to man, and as though devotion could call off the mind from practical duties. But love to God not only lays upon every duty the separate sanction of his wish, but it creates the social and benevolent affections where they were not before, and purifies them where it meets them. As we have seen two lighted tapers touch each other, and marked how the weaker flame is not extinguished by the stronger, but seems to catch its brilliancy and mount higher as it blends with it; so all earthly affections and sympathies are only purified, and strengthened, and elevated, as they are absorbed in supreme love to Him who is all in all.

Let the moralist, then, apply to the Church *his* test of virtue, and if, according to her *means* and *knowledge*, she will not labour for the social and material welfare of the race, and in the relations of private life seek the common happiness—let the Church, or the man who assumes her mantle, be branded for a spurious Christianity. But let the Church apply to the philanthropic moralist another, and an equally invariable test, and if he cannot evidence the love of God by its spontaneous results of personal devotion and communion, let him confess that he

lacks the one—the essential element of religion. For the song which ushered in the reign of Christianity is the type of all worship that is true and acceptable to Jehovah: "*Glory to God in the highest*"—then—"peace on earth, good-will toward men."

# XII.

## Injury done to Religion by Moral Men.

## XII.

### INJURY TO RELIGION BY MORAL MEN.

We say it thoughtfully, and with respect,—

Moral men, as a class, and in virtue of their morality, inflict the severest injury on the cause of religion. Not with specific design, nor even consciously, but none the less fatally, the wound is given. In some communities the influence of the purest moralists is more detrimental to the salvation of men, than the example of the vicious. Not, we repeat it, that they disbelieve or resent the loftier and more exacting doctrines of the gospel. Men who will not deny our creed, who contribute to its public advocacy, who are sensitive to the claims of religion, and who trust yet to experience its spiritual power—such men, so long as they are but moralists, exert an influence decidedly prejudicial to the religious welfare of others. And this is not merely a result of that law of mutual influence, by which all human imperfection acts as surely, although not as severely, as positive vice. The influence dif-

fers from that of vice, in its nature as well as in degree. It is peculiar to itself.

The mere presence of the moralist is, it is true, hurtful to religion in consequence of the power of example. That singular impulse to an imitation of others, which in a pure world would only serve as a blessed incentive to new attainments in virtue, loses none of its power amid the corruptions of this sinful world. Every character, whatever its peculiar moral or spiritual position, tends to assimilate all other characters to its own, and bring all besides to its own level. The vicious draw down to open vice, the moralist to mere morality: for the power of example is to bring all others to the *precise* point occupied by the exemplar himself. The same power which avails to draw them as far onward in virtue as he has advanced, avails to keep them from going further. If, then, we take the lowest experience of a distinct religious change, as the zero-point, above which and at which heaven is secure, but below which all is lost, then the example which tends to keep a heart below zero, tends to its positive destruction. The moralist may apparently or really bring others up *nearer* to the essential character; but by as much power as he has to elevate them to his degree, by so

much his example tends to keep them just there. Other influences may come in to urge them on to a safer advancement, or they may not; but so far as the moralist is concerned, his example only leads others nearer to the gate of the "city of refuge," and seduces them to remain still outside the threshold, where they are found by the avenger as surely as though they were further away.

2. But the influence of which we speak is distinct from this power of sympathetic imitation. Example is powerful, also, in virtue of its clearer exhibition of character than is supplied by mere description or abstract conception. Men can realize the existence and the nature of vice or virtue which is embodied in actual life. The higher the manifestation of the good and evil qualities composing human character, the more vividly those qualities are apprehended, and their moral desert as well as their moral quality is more clearly seen. In this there is found a salutary check to the attractive power of a base example for those who are comparatively unstained by vice, in that the clear and sharp sense of its evil, and its danger of retribution, startles and checks the soul.

But in the case of a correct moralist, although his character is defective and his salvation is in

peril, yet there is no sense of danger and of repulsion in view of open vice, which may warn the observer of his insecurity. Furthermore, as we have shown in previous pages, these natural virtues and graces seem easily invested with a religious character, and serve to exclude the idea of danger. The more perfect the moralist, the more fatal the influence. Where one better trait stands alone amid repulsive vices, it is condemned by its associations, and its worthlessness is easily admitted by observers. But where the false and transient lustre of such virtues is not thus demonstrated, and where a rare constitution or an æsthetic culture has nearly perfected the symmetry of the natural and instinctive character, the actual depravity of soul concealed beneath all this loveliness cannot be realized; and men attach a spiritual value to that character. They may admit that there is a higher spiritual experience which *ought* to be attained; but they cannot admit that such an amiable character should be utterly condemned. Notwithstanding they see it to be *distinct* from the spiritual change which has passed upon some others, they feel it to be a comparatively safe state; and, consequently, while a valid religious experience is conceded to be attainable, and de-

sirable, and something beyond a mere morality, however high, yet that religion is held to be needful, not to salvation, but only to the highest salvation: and moral men, if they do not enter the third heaven, are not expected to go to hell. The moralist himself may not be deceived. But let the principle once appear to others established, that anything less than spiritual regeneration is to secure anything like salvation, and men of far less natural virtue and culture than the moralist, will feel that the absolute necessity for a change of heart is a fable, and that they are at least, comparatively safe.

3. The same fatal conclusion is reached by another course of reasoning upon the virtues of moral men. It is not felt that although a true spiritual experience is a duty, yet mere morality will insure a qualified acceptance; but the idea is that this symmetrical morality is itself a valid religious experience. The correct conduct, the generous tone of feeling, the sensitiveness of conscience, and the æsthetic pleasure in good, seem undistinguishable from a valid love to holiness and to God; and therefore these higher moralists are considered as having the substance of that true experience which the Church urges them

to seek. But it is known that this experience is enjoyed without prayer, without reliance on the help of God, or on the atonement: it is purely a natural growth, and is professed to be such. What conclusion, then, can be reached, but that anything more than self-culture is needless in order to religious experience, and that all the faith and prayers of the Church are useless, or valuable only for the effort toward self-culture which they imply? Thus men who themselves believe in, and feel the need of a higher experience, and who, although deferring action and resisting the sense of duty, still expect to pray and be converted, are the means of confounding in other minds the very distinctions which they themselves see, and of leading others to deny and to neglect the very change which they themselves hope to seek and find.

4. Little as they think it, yet even through that deeply interesting class who do pray, although not with that regularity and that direct and full expression which secures to prayer its highest power; or who, shrinking from any public profession, strive to do their duty, and pray regularly in secret, this same principle works fatal deception. Their prayers have been heard by

God, in proportion to their earnestness and faith. They have gained a quickened conscience, a minuter watchfulness, a more prompt self-denial, and a more spiritual tone of feeling. They have not the full blessing of a child of God, but they have many of those drawings and illuminations of his Spirit by which God would lead them to follow on to know him. Yet to others, their entire character seems to stand forth as a natural growth. The sensibility and the deep abasement, the spirit of resignation and humble trust, which will sometimes breathe in language, are all credited to nature; and every added grace of character that is bestowed in answer to prayer and prayerful effort, is taken to evidence how, without religion, and without earnest and formal prayer, a man may possess all that the Bible requires.

We may sum up the injuries inflicted by the moralist upon religion in three points: the power of example, leading others to stop short of actual religion; the exhibition of so favourable a phase of natural virtue, that the undiscriminating conclude that, while it is not religion, it must be a moral state secure from future punishment; or the temptation to identify high morality with pure religion, and so make void the invitation to

the means of conversion and a saving faith. Such is the involuntary but inevitable influence of the moral man, so long as he remains nothing more. He can only escape from the position of an adversary to the salvation of others, by becoming a true and an avowed Christian himself.

The suggestions of a true and generous benevolence, and the reasonings of a strict justice, in regard to this point, are entirely distinct. Men *ought* not to follow bad examples, and there is no compulsion in mere example: yet while the heedless transgressor is not excused by the evil precedent before him, he who wilfully continues the inducement which leads him astray, is guilty of his destruction. The majority of immoral men may either see dimly the distinctions between morality and religion, between a safe position and an unsafe position, which we have illustrated; or at least they may have a strong though undefined impression of fallacy and wickedness in all the arguments afforded by defective examples. Yet that example *is* fatal. The great body of high moralists serve the less correct masses of the community as a shield to break the force of all the denunciations of Scripture, and destroy all the apparent value of its offers of salvation. The only way in which the moral-

ist can be relieved from the guilt of neutralizing the power of all the means of salvation that are given to thousands, is to choose another position, which is at his option.

Need we anticipate the retort, that our view would counsel the moral man to be less moral, and so to do less harm? If the favoured child of nature and circumstances had been born under those other bestowments and influences which form less lovely characters, he might perhaps have done as little or less of injury than now, in his present relations to the Church and to the world. But the very circumstances which have made him a moral man up to this hour, have so modified his power of example that, should he *now* degrade himself by vice, he would exert a tenfold worse influence than if he never had been correct and amiable. If the reader be seriously interested in guarding his influence upon others, he must feel that he has not the alternative of remaining where he is, or of being more open in transgression: the only relief to the humiliating consciousness of fatal example, is change to a genuine Christian experience.

Let it be felt, moreover, that this question is not one of example merely; the moralist has personal advantages for his own salvation, which

a life of immorality would at once destroy. As no man can renounce his own influence upon others, so no man can be unaffected by the society in which his moral habits place him. The social influence which surrounds the vicious is one of the strongest ties that bind them to sin. Business, or personal indulgences, once established upon a wrong principle, lend all the force of habit and of immediate interest to check the rising purpose of reform. Immorality bears its victim upon its current further and further away from all religious instruction and associations. It is not so with the moral man. His society is now enjoyed by those who are truly pious, and the counsels, the urgencies, and the assistances of the Church are ever waiting about him, for a moment of alarm, or sickness, or resolution, to make his way to the cross easy and secure. The longer he defers flight to the refuge, the more free from obstructions should he keep the way thither. *His own* destiny would be sacrificed were he to throw aside the restraints of his natural position; the destiny of others is involved in his continuing in his present defective state; it only remains that, for his own sake and for the sake of others, he assume his Christian duties at once.

We shall detain the reader no longer. In closing the last of the interviews which we have sought with those upon whom we have urged these solemn views, we shall not obtrude any lengthened appeal. Such men, if they receive our views, will feel their bearing on the wisdom and the duty of immediate action. Clear as, to his mind, the argument may have been, the writer's heart has felt the burden heavy. In the solitude of his study he has not been alone: forms of the living and beloved, have seemed to gather round him; forms of the departed and lamented ones; spirits of grace, and tenderness, and majesty, from the dim years of human history, have one by one drawn near; childhood and youth, with generous impulse, manhood with calmer energy of beneficence, and venerable age—they gather round me, and with a kind reproach seem to reply, to each utterance of the law, "All these have I kept from my youth up." I cannot speak in answer—I cannot read the heart—but from afar the echo of a voice sternly sweet responds, "*One* thing thou lackest!" They go away—sorrowful.

Bear witness that we have struck no wanton blow, nor stooped to the rhetoric of canting Phariseeism. If those have seemed to exalt the

common nature, who have deemed our natural virtues the mournful ruins, the trembling but unfallen columns of a glorious temple, how much more do we exalt its original capability and destiny, who find in all the high impulses and complex arrangements of natural virtue, the mere temporary scaffolding of a nobler building, which shall be eternal in the heavens! God help thee! that when time, and all temporary gifts and relationships, shall have passed away, thy soul may be a glorious temple, perfect in every form of virtue—column, and arch, and dome, of everlasting strength—within which Love, in its royal priesthood, offers perpetual worship.

THE END.

**WORKS PUBLISHED BY CARLTON & PHILLIPS,**
200 Mulberry-street, New-York.

## *Parker's (Mrs.) Christian Church.*

Annals of the Christian Church, in Familiar Conversations for Young Persons. By Mrs. PARKER.

**18mo., pp. 324. Muslin ..... $0 35**

This work was especially composed for the use of the young. Its aim is to convey, in a familiar style, such a view of the chief occurrences in ecclesiastical history as may furnish the youthful mind with a general knowledge of the subject, and prepare the way for more extensive and careful researches. Attention is paid to the order of events, to the external forms which Christianity has assumed in different ages, and to the great principles which no time or place can change, and which must always constitute the basis of the true Church of Christ.

We very cordially recommend this excellent volume. Why should the young have abridged histories of Greece, Rome, &c., and the history of Christ's Church be withheld from them? We do not, however, mean to say that this is *only* a book for the young. Those who have not time for the perusal of larger works, will find these "Annals" to be far more than a mere sketch of events and dates.

## *Wesley's Letters.*

Select Letters, chiefly on Personal Religion. By Rev. JOHN WESLEY. With a Sketch of his Character, by Rev. SAMUEL BRADBURN.

**12mo., pp. 240. Muslin ..... $0 50**

Mr. Wesley's Letters were written not to circulate idle gossip, or to nourish a sickly sentimentality, but to urge forward his correspondents in the divine life, that they might attain all the mind there was in Christ, and make their calling and election sure. They present an agreeable variety of subjects; and it is hoped they will prove acceptable to a numerous class of readers to whom the entire works of the venerable writer are inaccessible. To the use of the closet, and of private reading, it is presumed, they are especially adapted. The "Sketch of Mr. Wesley's Character," by which the letters are introduced, contains several interesting notices concerning the founder of Methodism which are not generally known.

## *Curiosities of Animal Life.*

Curiosities of Animal Life, as developed by the Recent Discoveries of the Microscope. With Illustrations and Index. Revised by Rev. D. P. KIDDER.

**16mo., pp. 184. Muslin ..... $0 50**

One of the most novel and interesting books of the times.

## *Friendships of the Bible.*

THE FRIENDSHIPS OF THE BIBLE. By AMICUS. Embellished with Engravings.

**12mo., pp. 140. Muslin..... $0 55**

The subjects of this attractive volume are, David and Jonathan; Abraham and Eliezer; Elisha and the Shunammite; Paul, Joseph, and Ruth; Fortuitous Acts of Friendship; Rulers; Bethany; Jesus and John.

## *Memoir of Richard Williams.*

MEMOIR OF RICHARD WILLIAMS, Surgeon: Catechist to the Patagonian Missionary Society in Terra del Fuego. By JAMES HAMILTON, D. D.

**16mo., pp. 270. Muslin..... $0 32**

This is really one of the most profoundly interesting and suggestive narratives we have ever read.—*St. Louis Presbyterian.*

In the way of a touching narrative of Christian faith, persevering and increasing even to the end, this work has few equals.—*Newark Daily Advertiser.*

Young says: "That life is long which answers life's great end." If this be true, the brief life of Richard Williams was longer than that of many who attain to three-score years and ten. He has illustrated, in a remarkable manner, the strength of love and the power of faith. While enduring the most severe suffering, with the prospect of a lingering and dreadful death before him, his soul rested in perfect tranquillity upon God as upon a rock, sheltering itself trustingly under the wing of Almighty Love, and joying even in being permitted to suffer for Christ's sake. Thus does God compensate his children who deny themselves from love to him, by inward peace and happiness, of which only those who make such sacrifices can have any conception.

## *Greek and Eastern Churches.*

THE GREEK AND EASTERN CHURCHES: their History, Faith and Worship.

**18mo., pp. 220. Muslin..... $0 30**

CONTENTS. Origin of the Greek Church—Its Progress and Present State—Tenets and Ceremonies of the Greek Church—Worthies of the Greek Church—Heretics and Sectaries of the Greek Church—Relations of Protestantism to the Greek Church.

A very timely book, giving, in a brief but clear form, an account of the history, faith, and worship of the Greek and Russian Churches. It will be seen from this book how little would be gained to Christianity by the triumph of Czar Nicholas in the war he is now so unrighteously waging.

THIS BOOK MUST BE
RETURNED

GTU Library
3 2400 00713 6033

GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500
All items are subject to recall